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THE LAND THAT IS DESOLATE

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THE DOME OF THE ROCK

Frontispiece

THE LAND
THAT IS DESOLATE

AN ACCOUNT OF
A TOUR IN PALESTINE

BY

SIR FREDERICK TREVES, BART.
G.C.V.O., C.B., LL.D.

SERJEANT-SURGEON TO H.M. THE KING
SURGEON IN ORDINARY TO H.M. QUEEN ALEXANDRA

AUTHOR OF
'THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LANTERN' 'THE CRADLE OF THE DEEP' ETC.

WITH FORTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR
AND A MAP

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET
1912

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THE LAND THAT IS DESOLATE

I

THE LANDING AT JAFFA

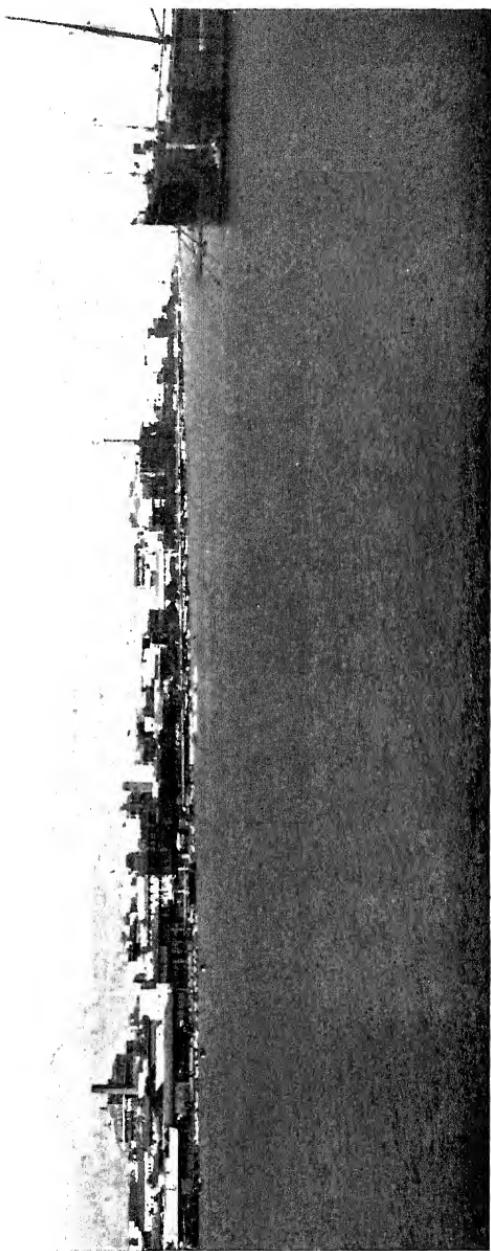
'IN the name of God glorious and Almighty. He that will pass over the Sea to the City of Jerusalem may go many ways, both by sea and land, according to the country that he cometh from.' Thus wrote Sir John Maundeville, Knight, a native of St. Albans in England. It was one of the few truths that he disclosed and may on that account be treasured.

Now although it is common knowledge that Jerusalem is in Palestine, there are persons of some enlightenment who are a little doubtful as to the precise situation of the country itself. They are familiar with the isolated map of the Holy Land and know that it is shaped like a slice of bread, whereof the straight crust stands for the coastline, and the soft, gnawed edge for the inland boundaries. This familiarity is possibly due to the fact that when a schoolboy is set to draw a map, as a holiday task, he always selects Palestine, partly because of its extreme ease of outline, and partly because the selection may

carry with it a beneficial suggestion of early piety and therefore count for righteousness. Where to place the territory is another matter, and I believe I am conveying information when I say that the Holy Land forms the blind end of the Mediterranean and that its shores are washed by the same waters that break beneath the gambling-rooms at Monte Carlo and make delectable the promenade at Nice.

To return to the shrewd saying of Sir John. It is the custom of most to reach Palestine by taking ship at Port Said and going to Jaffa, a port described in the Bible dictionaries as being on the border of Dan. It is a passage that appeals as much to the imagination as does any the Knight of St. Albans ventured upon. From Port Said to the land of Canaan! From the very new to the very old! Among towns of any pretence in the world Port Said is probably the newest and rawest. It was called into being by a very modern engineering enterprise. Not only is every building of it new, but the actual land upon which it is founded may claim to be of yesterday, since it has been, for the most part, gathered in from the sea. Dig beneath the bricks and stones of any town of note and the spade unearths remains of pre-existing men, but dig beneath the foundations of Port Said and there is nothing but the Nile mud of seasons still remembered, the sand still salt from the sea, the shells still bright with the colours that even now mark the drift on the beach.

Across a bight of the sea, north-east from the Canal Port, is the land of the ancient Israelites, the land that first crept out of the darkness at the dawn of the history



PORT SAID

of mankind. Port Said is a by-product of the Suez Canal Company, while Jaffa was a settlement that the Phoenicians founded in the land of the Philistines. The journey between the two places occupies some twelve hours and is appropriately made at night, so that the traveller, whose last sight of the new world takes the form of a turbine-driven liner, ablaze with electric lights, may sleep and dream and on awakening come upon that port in the old world from which Jonah started on his journey to Tarshish by boat.

He must be dull who does not look eagerly at sunrise for the first sight of this venerable country. As the horizon brightens there will appear the Holy Land, the land about which he read when he was first able to read, the place where the Bible was written and where the great religion of the world arose. It seems a land as remote from the world of to-day as that land of once-upon-a-time where the children's tales commenced. What does he expect to see emerge from the dull shadow far ahead of the ship's prow? What will he behold that will make this land unlike any other land in the world? He can hardly expect to find a company of armed Philistines patrolling the beach, or to hear from city walls the sound of sackbut and psaltery, or to see the smoke of a burnt-offering rising to the skies. He expects something uncommon, but unless his mood be very matter-of-fact he must prepare for a great disillusion.

There are few first glimpses of famous spots that are not disappointing. The first sight of Niagara, for example, arouses a feeling of actual resentment in that the view is so tamely like the pictures and photographs which

have been for years familiar. I can, for my own part, only recall three occasions when the actual view far exceeded the anticipation of it. These were the first glimpse of Venice as seen from a ship's deck at the dawn of a summer's day, the first sight of the Grand Cañon of the Colorado from the brink at Bright Angle, and the first sudden view of the Taj Mahal at Agra.

On nearing Jaffa in the early morning what is there in sight? Merely a low line of bare coast, not only treeless and blank but also colourless, for the sun is rising behind it. It is a land so stripped of every feature or characteristic as to be merely an antithesis to the sea. It is a coast—nothing more—a coast reduced to the simplest possibilities, so that it is as lacking in individuality as a coastline on a map. As the light increases the rudimentary bank becomes rose-coloured, while a line of white foam marks it off from the leaden sea. Of this new earth indeed it is possible to say little more than that it is not water. It seems to befit the primordial account in the Book of Genesis when God said, 'Let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas.' The apparent absence of vegetation suggests that here at least the work of creation had proceeded no further. It comes to pass, therefore, that the first visible part of the land of Canaan can be merely described as 'dry land.'

In a while Jaffa is reached, where the steamer, with no more ceremony than is expressed by the mate's command 'Ieggo,' drops anchor about a mile from the beach. The ancient name of Jaffa was Joppa, 'and you shall understand,' writes the exact Maundeville, that it is one of

the oldest towns of the world, for it was founded before Noah's flood.' The antediluvian city stands on a low, whale-backed hill which it covers from its summit to the water's edge. It is a very modern place, differing in no notable feature from fifty other Mediterranean seaports. On its crown, like the spike of a helmet, is the spire of a Roman Catholic church. Then follows a medley of white, brown, and yellow walls, of green sun shutters and red roofs. Far away behind the town some hills are to be seen. These are the mountains of Judea looking toward Bethel.

There were two English ladies on the steamer who appeared to view the scene with some mistrust. They were both old, bent, white-haired, and given to mumbling. They both wore spectacles. About their shoulders were wrapped woollen knitted shawls, while their dress was daringly Victorian. They had no doubt come from some hibernating English village where one could picture either of the two with the wrap over her head waiting at the gate of a garden of hollyhocks for the village postman. Although they were no more fit to travel than a couple of pet sheep they had come to see the Holy Land and so to realise the dream of their lives. It is easy to imagine with what discussion in the village the pilgrimage had been initiated, and with what sinking of heart the ancient serving maid, her mind full of wrecks and robbers, had received their last instructions as to the fowls and the cat. I had seen these two old ladies a night or so before in a drinking saloon at Port Said, in a glaring room, sultry with smoke and the reek of spirits, where red-faced men, infidels and heretics, sat at round tables, talked and

wrangled, played poker or tossed with dice in the hot blare of a band hammering out music-hall tunes. The two gentle old creatures huddled together in the smoke were as much out of place as a nun at a prize-fight, and the proprietor of the saloon was at a loss to know what to do with them. They had been advised to dine ashore, and, meeting in the street a 'nice kind boy,' they had asked him to recommend a respectable hotel. The 'nice kind boy' had naturally taken them to the establishment where he would get most baksheesh for his introduction. They were, however, soon directed aright and very appropriately housed.

Now from the deck of the ship they were taking their first look at the Holy Land. On either side steamers were noisily discharging cargo, around the ship was a crowd of boats full of screaming men, agents for tours, touts from hotels, and boys selling postcards. The most conspicuous object ashore was a large advertisement of a popular whisky. What they had expected to come upon I do not know, but it was evidently not this modern Babel. They drew aside, looking at one another almost reproachfully, but saying nothing, as if they had been shocked into silence by this shattering of their dream.

There is no harbour at Jaffa, but in its place a disorderly reef of black, jagged rocks, running parallel with the beach. These make a rude breakwater under the lee of which small boats find a shelter. A narrow gap in the middle of this stockade of stones provides access to the open sea. It is the dash through this gap that gives the final terror to the process of landing.

Jaffa is celebrated for at least two things: its excellent

oranges and its infamous landing. The landing is no worse than that from any open roadstead where the water is shallow and where the voyager has to make an ill-protected beach. The boats are long, six-oared galleys, manned by a crew of nine men. Of these men it is safe to say that finer boatmen are not to be found in the Mediterranean, nor, probably, in any other sea. It is the business of their lives to land passengers and goods all the year through, although with strong westerly or north-westerly winds so heavy a sea swings in that it is unsafe for any boat to venture beyond the rocks. Thus it is that at certain times of the year landing at Jaffa is impossible for days or even for weeks. We met a young lady in the town—the daughter of an English official there, who was returning home from Port Said. When she arrived off Jaffa no landing was possible, so she was carried on to Beyrouth. There she waited for a south-going steamer of the same company, but was again carried past Jaffa and landed once more at Port Said. In the third attempt she succeeded in getting ashore with a wetting; but the whole excursion occupied her a fortnight, whereas the normal passage from Port Said to Jaffa is twelve hours!

I gathered that the landing at Jaffa is classified locally under three types which are defined as 'no good,' 'all ri,' and 'very nice.' We landed when it was 'all ri'

which meant that getting ashore was possible but unpleasant. The steamer rolls from side to side, not only immoderately but apparently from mere wantonness. The result is that the passenger, awaiting his turn on the top of the ladder, sees the galley raised at one moment

to the level of his outstretched arms and then dropped to such a depth that the upturned faces of the crew are below his feet. The tourist who is 'accustomed to boats and understands the sea,' as well as the tourist who has initiative, will meet with trouble at this juncture if they take any action on their own account. I would advise the passenger at this crisis to commit his spirit to heaven and his body to Thomas Cook & Son, inasmuch as that firm has reduced landing at Jaffa to a reliable art. Let him be passive as a parcel, let him read a book or contemplate the sky. He will find himself suddenly lifted off his feet by four massive arms, he will then experience the sensation of being in a fast descending lift, and will next be aware that he is sitting on a seat in the boat with a silly smile on his face. People will fall on him, tread on him and sit on him, but he is on his way to the shore, and, as the helmsman repeatedly assures him, it is 'all ri.'

Then comes the row to the land, a passage which is conducted with great spirit. It is when the tourist is well away from the ship that he can experience

'The heave and the halt and the hurl and the crash
of the comber wind-hounded.'

Ahead is the black, savage palisade of rocks upon which the sea is breaking with the noise of thunder. The whole jagged line is white with foam, while the little gap for which the boat is making seems to be choked by a howling eddy and is half hidden by sleet-like spray. As the pass is neared the din becomes portentous, the sea is lashed into maniacal ferocity, wet gusts strike the traveller in the face and he appears to be drifting to destruction.

Then in a moment the boat is lifted up, as it were from beneath, is rushed hissing through the passage, and is poured together with the sea that bears it into the harbour just as water is poured out of a bucket.

For those who are not going ashore the disembarkation process is interesting to watch because the cargoes are so varied. Into a shore-boat that is moving up and down like the piston of an engine will be lowered a wardrobe and an immense looking-glass, followed by a live gazelle. Then will come two or three indefinite women with their heads tied up, a wooden bedstead, some fowls, a Greek priest, baskets of food and a red and blue box covered with Arabic inscriptions. This goes on until the steamer seems reasonably empty.

The beach at Jaffa is sandy. Straight out of the sand rise the walls of the town. The little natural boat harbour where the passenger lands is interesting, for here also was landed the cedar wood from Lebanon which was used in the building of Solomon's Temple. This timber was sent from Tyre by the order of Hiram, King of Tyre, and came down the coast in rafts, or, as the Book of the Chronicles words it, 'in flotes.' With the timber the King sent 'a cunning man endued with understanding,' so it may be hoped that the rafts were got ashore in a seamanlike manner. From the beach the pieces of wood were carried up winding paths along the hillside and thence to Jerusalem. While we were at Jaffa it was of interest to note that many camels and many men were employed all day carrying planks of wood and other building material up from the beach. In every twisting lane that led through the town men with planks

and camels with planks were ever to be seen. All this wood was going up to Jerusalem, but it was not cedar wood from Lebanon, and it was being dispatched to the City of David by goods train.

There is another episode connected with this little haven which has a more human interest. One day very long ago, according to the old writing, there came down to the beach a haggard man, a stranger, clad in unfamiliar garb, who, breathless and excited, inquired for a boat going to Tarshish. Such a boat lay in the harbour ; he climbed hurriedly over the side of it, paid for his passage, and then, throwing himself down exhausted in the bottom of the craft, was soon fast asleep. This was Jonah in the act of escaping from the country. No one now knows where Tarshish was except that it was a long way off. 'To go to Tarshish' seems to have been equivalent in ancient days to the modern seaman's expression 'to go foreign.'

The story of Jonah is in many ways curious, especially the end of the narrative, when the prophet goes to curse Nineveh and to foretell its destruction. We see him, an irritable melancholiac, walking out of the city 'very angry' because the spell does not work, and then comfortably settling himself down in a shady booth at a safe distance from the walls so that he might obtain a good view of the *débâcle* when the great city crumbled to pieces.

The traveller when he first places his foot upon the Holy Land, as represented by the little pier at Jaffa, finds himself involved in a crowd of miscellaneous people who are rushing about as aimlessly as ants in a disturbed ants'

nest. When he has elbowed his way clear of the mob he discovers that he is in the narrow street which leads up from the quay. The road is paved in a manner and is full of mud, but the larger cobbles act as stepping-stones whereby he is able to avoid the masses of vegetable refuse and discarded rags which are strewed in his path. The street is busy with human beings, and as he blends with the throng he feels that he has become one of the people of the Land of Promise. No one heeds his presence nor regards him as a stranger because, according to Baedeker, 20,000 pilgrims pass through Jaffa every year, while, according to the shipping agent, no less than 8000 tourists land at this port during the very brief Palestine season.

The folk in the street are of many kinds—men in brown blankets and in striped blankets, men in tarboushes and in white turbans, men in red jackets with blue bag trousers, wild creatures in sheepskins, veiled women in black, solemn personages in dark academical gowns, and cheerful folk in rags. The mud in the way is kept churned to a creaking tune by naked feet, by scarlet shoes, by black slippers and by machine-made boots. Mixed up with this multitude are many camels and donkeys and a few desultory sheep. These animals draw their feet out of the mud with a sound like that of a cork coming out of a bottle. The variety of smells is as bewildering to the nose as is discordant music to the ear. The dragoman will assure you with pride that these odours are more acute and penetrating in the height of the summer, but the statement baffles a normal imagination.

The streets traversed are narrow and steep. They ramble and intertwine like the branches of a bramble

bush. The traveller passes under arches, under overhanging windows, under leaning buildings that nod across the road like willow trees. He finds himself eddying about among such an indescribable medley of houses of every shape that Jaffa seems to resolve itself into a kind of builders' scrap-heap whereon have been cast all the discarded or misfit dwellings of a century. Yet this is the town that Antony gave to Cleopatra as a lover's gift.

The breathless and faltering tourist who, by exercising the agility of the gazelle, has just managed to keep his dragoman in sight, now asks that invaluable man where he is being taken to. The dragoman replies that he is taking him to the house of Simon the Tanner. This has a hospitable and restful sound which is very comforting. It will be remembered that St. Peter 'tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon, a tanner,' that Simon's house was 'by the seaside,' and that it was on the roof of the house that St. Peter fell into a trance. Now the house in question is in a poor quarter of Jaffa. It is not by the seaside, but is, on the contrary, near the summit of the hill, on that slope of it which looks seawards. Moreover, it is not a house but a mosque, and, further, it is quite safe to say that to no man is known the site of the tanner's dwelling. Eastern houses of the type a tanner would occupy are of so flimsy a kind that they would barely survive a lifetime. Many centuries have passed away since St. Peter was at Joppa. During these years the town has been besieged, laid low, and burnt to the ground, not once but many times. When Bertrandon de la Broc-quiere, first esquire-carver to that most redoubted lord,



JAFFA : FROM ROOF OF HOUSE OF SIMON THE TANNER

Philip of Burgundy, visited Jaffa in 1432 he found that place 'entirely destroyed, having only a few tents covered with reeds, whither pilgrims retire to shelter themselves from the heat of the sun.' It can hardly be supposed that for wellnigh two thousand years, marked as they have been by recurrent desolation, a non-Christian people would be at pains to preserve the site of a humble dwelling with the history of which they were totally unconcerned. A sacred site, however, is a valuable property* in Palestine ; so a site there must be, and thus it is that the curious can visit the house of Simon upon payment of one piastre per person to its Moslem caretaker. It is this one piastre per person and not the sacredness of the spot that keeps green the memory of St. Peter's friend in Jaffa. It may be said that the site shown to the tourist is not undisputed even in Jaffa, for the authorities of the Latin hospice maintain that their house is built upon the exact spot occupied by the elusive tanner.

The pathway to the one-piastre house is singularly rich in both mud and garbage. It passes near to a fragment of the old city wall which, although of no great antiquity, is one of the few ancient relics in Jaffa. The 'Maison de Simon' is represented by a mean little mosque which is quite modern and quite dirty. It suggests a wine vault rather than a sacred building. About it is a picturesque yard with a well and a fig tree. A few stone steps lead to the top of the mosque, from whence a generous view of the town and of the sea is to be obtained. The visitor looks down upon small flat roofs capped with white domes like inverted basins, and can obtain a glimpse of those little sequestered courts which hide behind the

houses of the poor. Moreover, there lies at his feet the whole scene of Andromeda's adventure.

The story of this ill-used woman is little more than an episode in a family brawl. It appears that Andromeda's mother, on some occasion, ventured the remark that she thought she was better looking than Juno. This not unfeminine reflection threw Juno's brother, Neptune, into such a state of unreasoning passion that he proceeded to destroy the estate of Andromeda's parents with all the forces at his disposal, including a sea monster. As the value of Andromeda's property was rapidly deteriorating, Jupiter, the head of the family, was consulted. He gave it as his opinion that the only way to stop Neptune from further 'goings on' was to chain Andromeda to a rock and allow her to be devoured by the monster. It was further proposed that this inconsiderate sentence should be carried out at Jaffa.

It was to one of the rocks which form the present boat harbour that the unfortunate young woman was fastened. A more vapid and unromantic scene for so pathetic a drama could not have been selected. It would have been as fitting if the poor lady had been chained to one of the brown rocks which are exposed at low tide at Margate.

Fortunately at the critical moment Perseus appeared and stabbed the dragon in the right shoulder blade with a dagger. As we have collateral evidence, furnished by Sir John Maundeville, that the monster measured eighty feet round the chest, this wound does not appear to be quite satisfying from either a dramatic or a surgical point of view. So we rely rather upon another account which says that Perseus turned the amphibian into stone. Of

course Perseus, according to the etiquette of the time, married Andromeda.

The moral of the story appears to be directed generally against the unwise habit of 'saying things' about people. The guide books state that even down to the Middle Ages the chains with which Andromeda was bound were shown —on payment of a small fee no doubt—to the tourists of the period. It will be evident therefore that Jaffa has, from quite early days, been seriously concerned in the preservation of ancient monuments.

I venture to think that the most interesting spot in Jaffa is a certain corner of the Public Garden where three roads meet. So ancient are these tracks that they are probably among the very earliest settled paths made by the feet of men. They have been traversed by the Canaanite and the Phœnician, by the Philistine and the Roman soldier, by the Paynim and the Crusader. That road of the three which turns southwards goes to Gaza, one of the five great cities of the Philistines, the city whose gates Samson carried upon his shoulders to the top of a hill that is before Hebron. The middle way leads to Jerusalem, and it may be claimed for it that it is the most travelled road in all the world. The track that passes northwards is the road to Shechem, the ancient capital of Samaria.

A curious blending of the Bible with the local directory is afforded by the information that the Ottoman Bank lies on the road to Gaza.

The outskirts of Jaffa are exceedingly pleasant, since the town, except where it fronts the sea, is hemmed around by orange gardens, and the green of the orange

tree never falters nor grows dim. The usual drive is to the Russian monastery along a quiet lane shut in with hedges of prickly pear. The monastery garden, with its paved alleys and solemn paths, is a place of peace. Here are the sycamore of the Bible, the locust tree, the oleander, and the olive. Many cypresses grow in the garden as well as many palms of the humbler kind. From among the shadows of the trees, and across the vast pool of unfathomable green dotted with gold which marks the orange grove, is the white immaculate city of Jaffa. As seen from the monastery close it is a city of enchantment, the unspeakable city in whose streets still floats the perfume of the cedar wood of Tyre and above whose roofs St. Peter saw the gleaming vessel descend from heaven. It would be well if the town could ever remain afar off and unapproachable, since long before the poor bedraggled walls are reached the adorable fabric vanishes.

The monastery church is of necessity erected upon a sacred spot—upon the site of the house of Tabitha. For this there is no ancient authority and no modern evidence except the casual impression of the builder. Moreover, in the garden is a rock-hewn tomb with a mosaic floor which is exhibited, without a blush and without any faltering of speech, as the burial-place of Dorcas. The claim, daring as it is, would probably not deceive a child of six.

Assuredly somewhere in or about Jaffa stood the house of Dorcas, the woman ‘who was full of good works and almsdeeds.’ The story of what took place in the house some two thousand years ago is one of the many



JAFFA : FROM GARDEN OF THE MONASTERY OF THE HOUSE OF TABITHA

terse, intensely vivid narratives which make the Bible so remarkable as a literary work. The words run only to a line or so and yet we can see that upper chamber of the little house in which the body of the dead woman was laid. Above her stands the austere, absorbed figure of the Man of God. He is engrossed in the contemplation of the kindly face on the pillow, while round him crowd a number of weeping women who insist upon showing him 'the coats and garments which Dorcas made,' thrusting each admired specimen of her needlework under his solemn eyes. He turns them all from the room, closes the door, and kneels down by the side of the figure on the bier.

If ever the story of Jaffa comes to be told it will provide a narrative of battle and siege, of plague, pestilence and famine, of murder and burning that can have few equals in the hideous chronicles of war. The last scene was not so long ago, only so far back indeed as the spring of 1799, when the progress of Napoleon was being opposed by England and Turkey. Leaving Desaix and his Ethiopian supernumeraries to hold Egypt, he determined to accomplish the conquest of Syria and the East, to raise in revolt the Christians of the Lebanon and Armenia, overthrow the Turkish power in Asia, and then march either on Constantinople or Delhi.¹ What did happen was this. Bonaparte marched on Jaffa and, on March 6, in spite of a spirited defence, he took it by storm. With the town was taken a vast host of men. 'What could he do with these 2500 or 3000 prisoners? They could not be trusted to serve with the French; besides

¹ *Life of Napoleon I*, by John H. Rose, vol. i. p. 201. (London. 1902.)

the provisions scarcely sufficed for Bonaparte's own men, who began to complain loudly at sharing any with Turks and Albanians. They could not be sent away to Egypt, there to spread discontent ; and only 300 Egyptians were so sent away. Finally, on the demand of his generals and troops, the remaining prisoners were shot down on the seashore.¹ Had even Jaffa seen before such a sight as this—over two thousand men murdered in cold blood at the foot of their own town ! It would seem as if the waves of a century would not suffice to wash the stain of blood out of the yellow sands.

After Jaffa came the march to Acre and the assault upon that town. But the English were already there and had made stout ravelins and ramparts out of the ancient walls. At the beginning of May, Bonaparte made a desperate attempt to carry Acre by storm. He was repulsed. He attacked again and again, but failed to turn the British out of what he termed their 'mud hole.' As the month wore on a new ally came to the help of the men in the mud hole in the form of the plague. Death was soon busy among the French. Although a breach had been made in the wall many battalions refused to advance towards it, because they had to walk over the swollen and putrid bodies of so many of their comrades. On May 20 Bonaparte gave the order to retreat.

Then began the march back to Jaffa, and among marches fearful in history this is one of the most terrible. The plague marched with the column. Men fell on all sides ; troopers dropped from their saddles, dead ; many

¹ *Life of Napoleon I.*, by John H. Rose, vol. i. p. 203. (London. 1902.)

committed suicide as they walked, for to tramp on was only to prolong misery and pain, to drop behind was to be murdered, so a bullet through the brain was the best way home. Every horse was employed in carrying a sick or a wounded man, while the looked-for hospitality at Jaffa was furnished by a lazarus house.

The sufferings of the sick in that town must have been beyond imagining. A number of those who were able to be moved were taken away in ships, while 800 were conveyed to Egypt in carts and litters across the desert. Those left behind were left to die, yet when the English Commodore arrived at Jaffa a little later he found 'seven poor fellows still alive.' Still alive ! There is meaning in those words. Still alive after a fruitless campaign, after helping to shoot down 2000 unarmed men on the beach, after the fetid trenches at Acre, after the death-march back by the sea, after the delirium of the plague house, after the endless procession of dead men carried out on litters to the tolling of bells. Still alive !

II

THE WAY TO JERUSALEM

THE journey from Jaffa to Jerusalem is most conveniently made by rail. The distance by this route is fifty-four miles, and as the train occupies three and three-quarter hours in the passage the speed is such as to allow the traveller a generous opportunity of surveying the country traversed. The train is not only slow but the engine appears to labour exceedingly and to need a considerable rest at each station in order to recover its breath. As Jerusalem lies 2500 feet above the level of the sea, much of the journey is up hill, and this ascent the engine accomplishes with the gasps of a wearied but determined asthmatic. The details of the journey and of all other journeys are arranged by a dragoman, and I should like here to record my indebtedness to the dragoman who accompanied us, and to whose kindness, intelligence, and intimate knowledge of the country and its history we owe much.

The station at Jaffa is small, noisy, and confused, as well as servilely commonplace. Strangers who expect that a station in the Holy Land should present some Biblical or Canaanitish feature will be disappointed, since

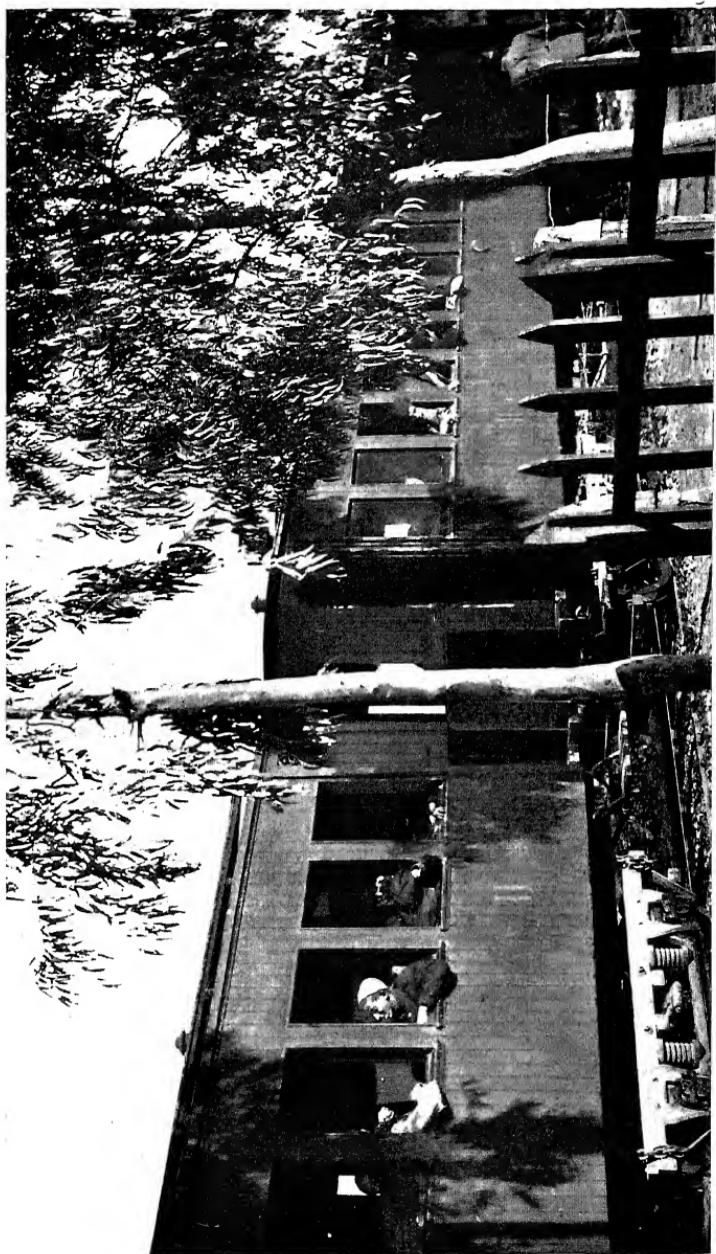
the terminus differs in no essential from a station on a local line in Italy or France. The carriages make no pretence to reach beyond that humble standard of comfort which attains throughout Palestine. The native passengers in the third-class carriages lean dangerously out of the window most of the way, and as they appear to be not only acquainted with one another but with all the countrymen within hailing distance of the line and all the folk at every railway station, there is a considerable outpouring of speech before the journey ends.

After the pretty garden suburbs and the orange groves of Jaffa are passed the train enters upon the Plain of Sharon. This level plain extends from Jaffa to Mount Carmel and from the foothills of Judea to the sea. It is diligently if ineffectually cultivated. Many square miles are given up to grass lands, but the vaster area is covered by ploughed fields in the winter and by fields of corn in the spring. It was at the end of January that we went up to Jerusalem, at a time when the whole plain was green with rising blades of wheat. About the villages are fig and olive trees, with an occasional palm or cypress, and a tangle of poor bush. There are eucalyptus trees around the stations, but with these exceptions the vast flat, so far as the eye can reach, is practically treeless. Such hedges as exist are mostly of prickly cactus, a sour, wizened, and unnatural plant which is at best a miserable substitute for the hawthorn or the elder bush of the Dorset lane. The villages passed are secretive-looking clumps of flat-topped huts made, it would seem, of a chocolate-coloured mud and decorated with litter and refuse. Such roads as exist look like brown veins

traversing the green. The Plain of Sharon is emphatically not beautiful. Indeed, from its vastness and monotony, it is very wearisome. It is as level as a billiard table and almost as smooth and as uniformly green. One thinks of the Rose of Sharon and imagines banks and terraces covered with some such transcendental crimson rambler as runs riot in old Persian embroideries; but the Rose of Sharon the learned say is no other than the sickly narcissus.

In the spring—that is, from early March to early May—the plain and indeed the whole country are covered, we are assured, with flowers both wondrous and brilliant. Now to those who visit Palestine at other times than the spring these flowers become somewhat of a burden. The out-of-season tourist hears probably more of them than the spring tourist sees of them. They recur like a universal chorus when applied to a dozen different songs. If any comment be made upon the uncouthness of a spot there is ever the answer: ‘But you should see it when the flowers are out.’ If the poverty of the land be criticised there is the ready reply: ‘But you should see it when the flowers are out.’ Yet a difficulty stands in the way of witnessing this spectacle.

There are three seasons in the Holy Land, viz.: the winter, when the land is bare and the roads are mud; the summer and autumn, when the land is bare and the roads are dust; and the spring, when all is assumed to be beautiful. The heavy rains, the ‘former rains’ of the Bible, come in the winter. ‘The latter rains,’ which are light, fall in March and April. After May follow the months of heat and drought, when the land dries up, when



THE TRAIN FROM JAFFA TO JERUSALEM

the vegetation crackles like a parchment, and the earth is baked like a brick. It is obvious, therefore, that the spring is the time of election. It is the time of the flowers, but it is also the time of the tourists. Now the tourists do not come in small, awed and devout parties—they come in ravening hordes ; not in companies of ten but in hosts of a hundred. Since the Christian Era Palestine has been accustomed to pilgrims of all kinds, of all nationalities, and of all degrees, but the American tripper who, landing in his strength from a leviathan ' pleasure cruise,' seeks to ' do the Holy Land ' in three or four days, is ' le dernier cri.' Like an explosive substance, he needs room. Sir Rider Haggard, in his charming ' Winter Pilgrimage,' alludes to ' a gigantic cheap American trip numbering over five hundred souls.' As the country is very small it is evident that a humble party of two or three is in danger of being swept away by the advance inland of such a host as this. It comes to pass, therefore, that when the flowers, on the one hand, are tried in the balance against the tourists on the other, the weight is with the latter ; so that the pilgrim who wishes to come and go in peace must content himself with either the ' former rains ' or the drought, for the spring is denied him.

To come back again to the train. The Plain of Sharon, although it may fail to delight the eye, has this more solid attraction, that it is a true part of the land of the Philistines, and that as we see it now so did they see it then. This, in a country of imposture and make-believe, is something to lay hold of. There is still the same green flat stretching between the blue hills of Judea and the pansy-coloured sea. No doubt in the days when

Abner, son of Ner, the captain of the host, looked from the heights for signs of the Philistine camp the land was more deeply wooded, richer and more luxuriant. It is now threadbare, poor, and spiritless, for the rule of Turkey has afflicted the country with a kind of social and political malaria.

Looking across the plain from the carriage window, there may not be a modern building in sight. The primitive villages differ probably but little from the village of the days of Christ, if only the kerosene tins could be turned into water jars of earthenware. The shepherd and the sheep are the same as those who were present in the eyes of the Good Shepherd and who belong to the time when Sharon was 'a fold of flocks.' Here and there a belated man is ploughing with two oxen. The plough he guides is a tough crook of oak shod with iron, and those who are learned in these things say that this is the plough of the time of the Parable of the Sower. On the ancient roadway—a mere track of foot-stamped mud—a woman will be riding on a donkey; the outline of her head is very gracious as it is seen through the hood she wears. She might have come from some old Italian picture showing the journeyings of the Saints. There are strings of camels and men walking in single file, just as they do in ancient wall paintings, the camels with so supercilious a stride and the men with so weary a bearing that the camels seem to be driving the men into captivity. The scene is so in harmony with the setting appropriate to certain events of Scripture history that it would not be incongruous if a marauding party of Philistines was to be seen hurrying across the plain.

These Philistines were a slashing and hardy folk, and it would be well for the country if a new colony of Philistines, free from Turkish control, could make a present-day settlement on the coast. The Philistines of old were sea rovers who, sailing out from Crete, or from the *Æ*gean Islands, descended upon Canaan as the Danes descended upon East Anglia. They were a non-Semitic people, superior in culture and enterprise to the Hebrew settlers who already occupied the land. They established themselves in the level country which lies between Carmel and the frontier of Egypt, and in this land of Peleshet they built five fortified outposts—namely at Ekron, Ashdod, Ascalon, Gaza, and Gath. From pirates they became cattle raiders and robbers of threshing-floors; from mere buccaneers they became merchant adventurers and men of crafts. They kept up a constant guerilla warfare with the old settlers, the much worried people of Israel, and could bring into the field, on occasion, not a mere rabble of brigand carles but a mighty and brilliant army, such as gathered at Michmash which is eastward from Beth-aven.

In this army there were the pickets and the scouting parties of light infantry, carrying bows, together with the solid phalanx of the men-at-arms. These latter wore round helmets and coats of mail; they carried javelins and long lances and each was attended by a shield-bearer. It was these roundheads who became the terror of the men of Israel, who made 'the people faint' and so harassed them that they 'did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.' There was neither town nor village on the border

that had not, at some time or another, been awakened by a breathless messenger who, as he ran through the startled street, called out 'Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.' It may be assumed that the Philistines fought both for lust of battle and for the love of loot, both for the seizing of pasture land and for the keeping open of the great caravan routes to Damascus by the north and to Egypt by way of the desert.

Now for long years a sickly silence has fallen upon the Plain of Sharon. Where was once 'the noise of a whip and the noise of the rattling of the wheels and of the pransing horses, and of the jumping chariots' there is now only the puffing of the locomotive and the rattle of the tourist train.

The first station of note on the way to Jerusalem is Lydda, a little place lost in a great olive grove. Here lies the body of no less a person than St. George, the patron saint of Merrie England, the same who figures in the coinage of our country as a man naked but for a hat and scarf and who, sitting bareback on a jibbing horse, threatens a much convulsed dragon with a knife. As a further test of faith the passer-by is told that the saint was born in Lydda, or—as the town was then called—Lod. It is said that a church has stood over the remains of this fearless being ever since the sixth century. The tomb is still in excellent repair and can be seen by loyal Englishmen and others on payment of a fee of five piastres per person to the Greek sacristan. The preservation of the tomb must be due to some miraculous circumstance, for it would appear that the church in which

it stands has been destroyed, laid in ruins, and indeed razed to the ground, not less than five times.

A little way beyond Lydda the tower of the white mosque of Ramleh becomes, and for long remains, the most conspicuous feature of the landscape. It is of considerable antiquity, dating, as many say, from the commencement of the fourteenth century. As seen from the railway it is neither impressive nor picturesque, since it has much the appearance of a white lighthouse.

A far more interesting object is the Jerusalem road which is crossed near to Ramleh. Judged by the standard of European highways it would be classed as a farm road in indifferent repair, yet it is one of the most famous human causeways in the world. Through what astonishing scenes in history does this humble little track wend its way ! The chariot wheels of the Philistines have made ruts in its sorry surface, the camels that bore the cedar wood for the building of Solomon's Temple have turned its dust into clouds, and pilgrims ' as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude ' have left the impress of their feet on its mud. One would almost expect to find this *via sacra* paved with gold, or bleached white with men's bones, or made luminous by the saintly folk who have passed along it. There are none of these features, but in the place of them and as a sign and symbol of the times there is a level crossing athwart the road that leads to the City of David.

A little farther on a friendly dragoman points to a clump of trees on the right of the line among and around which are a few modern buildings. He says that this is the Jewish Agricultural Colony of Akir, and adds

mechanically that Akir is the surviving representative of Ekron, the famous city of the Philistines, and concludes by muttering 'Joshua thirteen three,' as if he were giving the telephone number of the place. Ekron was the northernmost fortress of Peleshet. It stood boldly on the frontier, the outpost of a defiant people, a strong place full of strong men. On its watch-towers the sentry never slept, above its walls was ever the gleam of helmet and spear, while its narrow streets rang night and day, and through summer and winter, with the footsteps of men-at-arms. There was never peace in Ekron, and so it is that the old chronicles have much to tell of the part it played in a border war that saw many generations come and go.

But there is one event in the history of this battered place which is so tender and so childlike that, in my thinking, it makes the country about Akir the most enchanting spot on the road to Jerusalem.

This is the story as the chronicle tells it. The Philistines, in one of their raids upon the men of Israel, captured the Ark of God and took it with them from Ebenezer to their stronghold at Ashdod. At once, in consequence of this, dire trouble fell upon Ashdod, a trouble so disastrous that the cry soon arose: 'What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?' The constable of the town was prompt in his action, for he sent the Ark away to Gath. No sooner had it reached that city and had been carried through the gaping crowds in the streets, than a deadly pestilence broke out which was followed, we are told, by 'very great destruction.' Thereupon the men of Gath determined to send the Ark

to Ekron, to Ekron the invincible and fearless city that cared for naught and was dismayed by naught.

So to Ekron the Ark came and with it came the Angel of Death. The garrison thought little of siege and assault, and little of fire and famine, but of this black horror that laid men low silently and mysteriously, that strangled them in the dark, that spared neither great nor small, they had an unconcealed and appalling fear. A council of the wise men of the city was called at which it was decided that the Ark should be sent back to the land of Israel. The resolve was carried out in the following simple manner.

A new cart was built by the wheelwrights of the town, by men who were better versed, no doubt, in the making of chariots, and upon it the Ark was placed. It then seemed well to these rough filibusters that some present should be sent with the Ark as a gracious offering and as a token of regret. So they caused to be made five little images in gold and five little golden mice. As works of art it may be supposed that these figures were crude and scarcely above the achievement of a child. Possibly some burly armourer laboured over them and found the task ill fitted to his clumsy fingers. He could hammer out a breastplate or a pair of greaves, but such tiny things in gold made his hands to tremble.

These delicate offerings the frontiersmen put into a box, and the box was placed, solemnly and proudly, in the cart by the side of the Ark. The men then yoked two milch kine to the new cart and, leading them out of the town by the gate that faced the border, let them go in whichever way they would. 'And the kine took the

straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.'

It is a wonderful picture—the way through the corn-fields, the lowing cattle, the slowly moving Ark, and the men of Ekron watching from the gate to see if the Ark would 'go again to his own place.' Now it so happens that some miles beyond Ekron the train passes a spot marked by a few fragmentary ruins. These are the ruins of Ain-es-shems and they stand upon the site of the Beth-shemesh of the days of old. The railway therefore follows the road from Ekron to Beth-shemesh, and indeed this memorable highway of the lowing kine runs parallel with the track.

However much the country may have altered since the time when the Ark passed by, there are still the cornfields and still the grey hills streaked with lilac shadows towards which the creaking cart from Ekron made its way. Here at least is the actual scene of an event in Bible history, unspoiled by any church and undefiled by the parade of priestcraft.

The train is now in the Wâdi-es-Sarar or valley of Sorek, and it will be remembered that Samson 'loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.'

This valley is no glen of enchantment, no luscious glade of the siren; on the contrary it is a bleached, cheerless gulley full of stones, almost bare of trees and frowned upon by barren, uninviting hills. There are a few flocks

and herds to be seen, but it is hard to understand what the sheep and the goats and the cattle live upon, since the whole valley is as grey and sapless as the lichen on a gravestone. Here indeed are both 'the cattle' and 'the thousand hills,' but the landscape that embraces them is ungenerous, niggardly, and mean. The fascination of Delilah must have been great indeed if she could attract any but a prospecting stone merchant to this wizened spot. One will be told of course that in spring Sorek is ablaze with flowers, but it is not always spring in Palestine.

It is while the melancholy of the valley is upon one that the dragoman points to a bare, featureless hill on the left and remarks casually that it was there that Samson lived. He draws attention to the place in the same matter-of-fact manner in which he would indicate a German clothing factory. These demonstrations of scenes from sacred history come upon the unprepared with some degree of shock. With most of us Bible history belongs to the Garden of Youth, when capricious facts are graven on the mind in fantastic hieroglyphics. In the very early days when a small forefinger follows the line of startling print, when words are not words unless read aloud, and when the telling of tales is an evensong for the restless and an opiate for minor pains, the narratives of Scripture and the nursery story all belong to one category of general knowledge. In these uncritical years Jack the Giantkiller is as real as is that David who slew Goliath with a pebble from out of a brook. As for the Amorites, the Hittites, and the Jebusites, are they not of the same world as the tribes of Lilliput, and may they not have been encountered by

Sinbad the Sailor on his many voyagings ? Whatever the fault may be, whether the instruction is given at too impressionable an age, or is conveyed in too spiritual a manner, the fact remains that it is difficult with many to associate Bible scenes with spots on the solid earth, with places which may be actually reached by steamers and trains, and about which it would not be irreverent to inquire if they afforded convenient hotel accommodation. Thus it is that we are apt for a moment to resent the belief that a hill pointed out by a prosing guide from a railway carriage window is, in all seriousness, the birthplace of Samson, just as we should repudiate the statement that it was the early home of Peter Pan.

Samson, apart from his immense strength, would appear to have been, to the end of his days, little more than an overgrown boy, spoilt, self-indulgent, given to practical jokes and to bragging.

His exploit at Gaza was just such a prank as an undergraduate would delight in. The watch at Gaza actually 'laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city,' feeling sure that they would take him in the morning ; but at midnight Samson comes rollicking along and, chaffing the local Dogberrys as they crouched in the shadows by the porter's lodge, takes up the gates themselves and walks off with them into the country, his great shoulders shaking with laughter as he pictures the dismay of his would-be captors.

The manner in which he treated Delilah when she was trying to worm out of him the secret of his strength can, so far as I know, be described by no English word other than the schoolboy's expression 'rotting.' Samson

‘rotting’ Delilah is a little comedy that the boy in the Bible class will ever appreciate, just as he will understand that nothing but Samson’s love of swagger would have caused him to ‘give himself away’ as he did over the matter of his riddle.

Samson, however, had a pretty, if caustic wit, for when his young friends—after having coaxed the answer to the riddle out of Samson’s wife—tell it him as if it were a discovery of their own, the strong man, guessing what had happened, says shrewdly and with a twinkle in his eye: ‘If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.’

It cannot be claimed that the scenery of the country where the drama of Samson’s life was played can add one single touch of vividness or of character to the familiar history. The background indeed is as negative as a bank of mist. Keith truly says, in his ‘Land of Israel,’ that ‘the rounded and rocky hills of Judea swell out in empty, unattractive, and even repulsive barrenness, with nothing to relieve the eye or captivate the fancy.’

Now commences the long, solemn, mysterious ascent through the country of the everlasting hills to the City of David. I know of no approach to any town that is quite so austere or so haunting as this. The road toils ever upwards, hidden from the sight of the world, along an interminable valley of stones, along a melancholy ravine, sullen and secretive.

The hills are bare save for some hectic grass and starveling scrub. The rain-scoured sides are made up of mummy-brown earth in which grey stones are laid in horizontal lines, and so regular are these ledges of rock

that they look like penitential steps up the side of the steep. For some sixteen miles there is scarcely a bush to be seen and never a tree. Now and then a stream runs along the bottom of the trough, but it is as unsympathetic as the stones it runs between. A few goats may be come upon here and there, but seldom a sign of the habitations of men.

The road is very tortuous. It threads its way through a sunken labyrinth of monotonous rock. The train turns to the right and to the left as if it were bewildered, or as if, being caught in the sinister maze, it were struggling to escape. At every moment one expects some relief, some change of view, but the outlook is ever the same. We climb up hemmed in by hills and hills and hills, all barren, all impassive, and all alike in shape. We seem to pass along a processional road, through an awful assemblage of earthen pyramids, crumbling into ruin.

Beyond this hushed labyrinth and at the end of the purgatorial road, along which surely must have travelled the Wandering Jew, is the Golden City, hidden away in a strong place and surrounded by the ramparts and trenches of a wilderness of stone.

At the end of the winding pass we come upon more open country and finally upon a valley of stones which is called Bittir. Dismal and barren as is the spot it is yet the abode of men, for the village of Bittir is of some pretence. Goats and human beings are searching for a living among the rocks and the stone terraces of this harsh place. There are a few vines in the valley and a few olive trees, but they do not suffice to make the bare slopes live.

Bittir, being at the entrance to the gorge which leads up to Jerusalem, was at one time a stronghold of formidable repute. It was last held by the Jews against the Romans during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian in the year A.D. 135. The garrison for a period of no less than three and a half years kept at bay the invincible forces of Rome, and when the last defence was breached and the last trench rushed, so horrible a massacre of the inhabitants took place that the tortured valley was full of dead. It was a memorable victory, for it marked the failure of the last attempt of the Jews to regain their independence. With the fall of Bittir, indeed, the history of the Jews in the Land of Promise came to an end.

Throughout Palestine I met with no spot which appeared to be so well fitted as this to be the scene of Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, since the place is so unhappy looking, so bleak, and so full of the shadow of death.

According to the ancient writings, Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, found himself in the midst of a valley which was full of dry bones. The solitary man, standing among the bleached bones in some such dread glade as this, made the rocks of the silent place to echo with the startling cry: 'O ye dry bones, thus saith the Lord God, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live.' Then from the horrible heaps of sightless skulls and grinning jaws, of thigh-bones and white claw-like hands, there arose 'a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to bone.' More than that, as the man looked 'the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in

them.' In the dark hollow eye sockets of each mournful head would come a spark of light, lips would cover the ash-dry teeth, and flesh would wrap around the white hoops of the ribs.

Then once more the stillness of the ghoulish spot was broken by the voice of the man calling out, as he raised his arms heavenwards: 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live . . . and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.'

Such an army, a grave, still army, might well line the slopes of the valley of stones at Bittir, and stand out, in gaunt array, against the sky-line on the brink of the glade and fill with a rustling, earnest crowd the way that leads to Jerusalem as well as the pass that leads to the sea.

The train, after crawling out of Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones, loiters across a rock-strewn plain of unreasonable ugliness, and finally, with every symptom of extreme exhaustion, staggers into the terminus of Jerusalem.

Of the city there is nothing to be seen, for the station is in a land-to-let modern suburb which might be on the outskirts of Toulon. As for the station itself it is a mere sketch of a wayside halting-place—a line of rails, a small house with a clock, and a white fence. There was so much bustle on the platform that I thought a race meeting or some such boisterous occurrence must be impending. The average dragoman now rises in his might and shows of what flashing metal he is made. He is hung about with bags and 'things' like the Knight in 'Alice in Wonderland.' He implores his charge to be calm, and then proceeds to throw himself about

among the crowd as if he were taking part in a 'rally' at a pantomime.

Outside the white fence is a compact mob of men with their heads in tarboushes or in woollen shawls, and their bodies in rags. These are the hotel touts, the cab runners, the bazaar scouts, the shopmen's pickets, the guides, and the general inutility men who flourish in the East as tares among wheat.

To this rabble the defenceless tourist is flung as a sheep to a pack of wolves. He is forced through the narrow gate as through the wicket in a sheep-fold. He is received with a hungry roar, and, resisting feebly, is drawn into the unclean human whirlpool. Every man in the crowd appears to have at least six forearms of exceptional reach. These are all outstretched towards him as he revolves in the perspiring eddy. Cards are thrust into his face or jammed into his pocket. Whatever he carries—if it be only a stick or a pair of gloves—is torn from him as if it were something for the famished to eat. He is pawed over by a hundred damp and dirty hands. He is trodden upon by naked feet and by flopping shoes. He is rolled between a hundred bony bodies, as if he were undergoing some process of manufacture, and is finally ejected into a cab in the form of a Victoria which has probably seen its better days in the streets of Paris or of Naples.

III

THE FIRST VIEW OF THE HOLY CITY

THE supreme moment is now at hand ; in another second or so there will burst upon the eye of the traveller a view of the city of all cities. The spectacle is usually vouchsafed under disturbing and unbecoming circumstances. Twelve cabs will start from the station yard at one time and will then proceed to race to the Holy City. The purpose of the racing is threefold. It is assumed, in the first place, that the tourist wishes to arrive promptly at the hotel in order to secure accommodation in advance of others. The driver, on his part, is eager to display the fleetness of his horse, in view of further service ; and, finally, he has probably a reputation in the cab-racing world which he is anxious to maintain.

The cabs, starting at a gallop, reach the top of a hill and proceed to dash down it as if they were escaping from Sodom or Gomorrah. There is Jerusalem on the next hilltop, but it is impossible, owing to the speed of the cab, to the effort involved in clinging to its unsteady and collapsing framework, and in rescuing items of luggage from destruction, to give the city other than incidental attention. Before the traveller realises the

fact, the twelve cabs, driven in a fashion that Jehu the son of Nimshi would approve, have passed across the Valley of Hinnom and are climbing the side of the Mount of Zion. Before him the fare sees but one all-prominent object. It is a very new Jubilee clock of white stone, in which, with regrettable skill, the pungent vulgarity of the Jubilee clock of England is reproduced in an Oriental medium. This clock stands by the Jaffa gate, and through that gate the entrance to Jerusalem is made.

For my own part, on the advice of my dragoman, I did not share in the chariot race. It was sufficient to see the cabs, in a disorderly troop, dash down the hill, the tourists rocking to and fro as if they were borne upon a tempestuous sea and were buffeted by a mighty wind. The Valley of Hinnom represents the Tattenham Corner of this Epsom of Mount Zion. Beyond that point the cabs draw out into a straggling line, with two horses possibly running neck and neck, the whips cracking, and the drivers shouting with appropriate profanity.

Common rumour will have it that the first sight of Jerusalem is very disappointing. It is obvious that the disappointment, if any, must depend upon the degree of expectancy with which the city is approached. If the visitor thinks to see the Golden Jerusalem of the hymn-book, or the rainbow city of the coloured print, or the walled place of two thousand years ago, he will experience some such disappointment as will befall the foreigner who expects, on emerging from Cannon Street railway station, to see traces of the great Roman camp which stood on the bank of the Walbrook.

The first view of Jerusalem will, I think, satisfy any person of reason. Here in a bleak, inhospitable retreat, approached by a weary defile through bleaker hills, is the passionate, sorrowful city where was enacted the great drama of the world. It would seem to have hidden itself away from the eyes of men, as a hermit in a secret place among the rocks, alone with the memory of wellnigh three thousand tragic years.

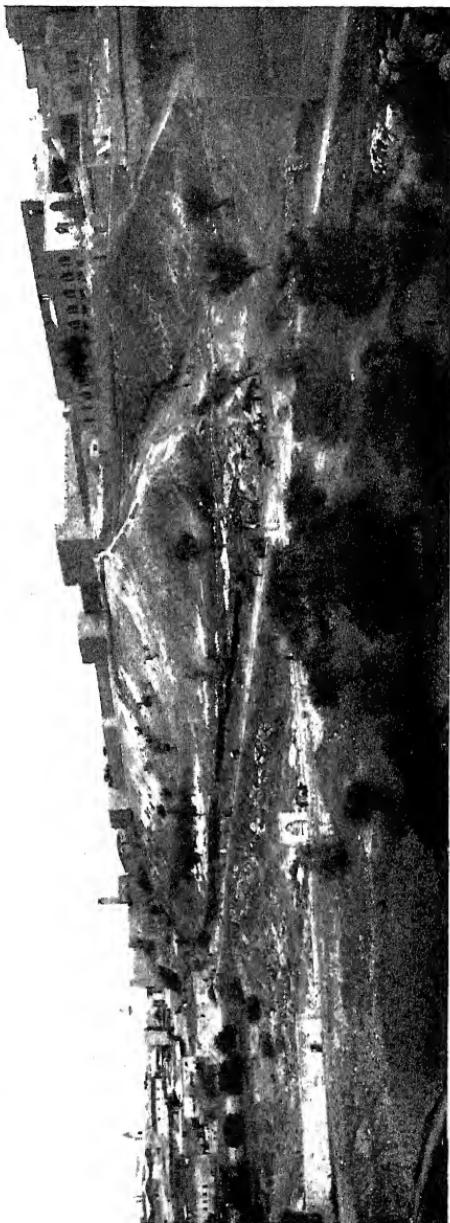
The traveller, at his first glance, sees on a pale hill of stone the corner of a walled city. The yellow light of the setting sun illuminates it and makes it glow as if by the light from a lamp.

That which before all things arrests the eye is not the city but the massive wall which encircles it about. Every battlement on the parapet stands out clear cut and bright. The square, broad-shouldered towers which hold the height at just such intervals as a sentry would pace, throw sharp, purple shadows on the long curtain behind them. There are domes and pinnacles and roofs in untold multitude beyond the wall, but they are as the tree-tops in a convent garden.

The first impression of Jerusalem is that of a strong place built upon a height, of a fortress city spacious and dignified, of a living, breathing town in a land of stones. So harsh, bleached, and colourless is the country round about that the city itself is as the shadow of a rock in a weary land. With the exception of a few pallid olive trees, a patch here and there of indefinite green, and a melancholy cypress, the environs of Jerusalem are a dusty, ungenial limestone waste.

At the bottom of the steep scarp on which the city

THE FIRST VIEW OF JERUSALEM.



stands is a dry valley of rocks. This is the valley of the long-dead Kedron. Near the valley is a mass of stones displaying sufficient order to distinguish ruinous buildings from tumbled rocks. This is the village of Siloam. On this side of Jerusalem there is no other suburb. Within the heavy wall is the city ; without is the ochre-coloured limestone desert. Old as is the wall there is no look of antiquity about the town itself, which may be a place of yesterday. Far away beyond Jerusalem are the lilac-blue mountains of Moab which afford to this thousand-roofed city a magic and unsubstantial background.

When the traveller, dazed and exhausted by the turmoil of his arrival, comes to himself he finds that he is seated in a florid coffee-room on an Austrian bent-wood chair. He has hung his cloak over a Japanese screen ; he is ministered to by a German waiter, the while his eye is engaged by a picture on the wall representing the execution of Charles I. Amid such surroundings the truth comes upon him that he has reached at last the city of the Great King.

IV

THE CITY OF SORROWS

OF the Jerusalem of to-day it may be said that 'the city lieth foursquare' as did that city of pure gold whose light was like unto a jasper stone, clear as crystal. As already noted, there is still about the city 'a wall great and high,' but it dates only from the sixteenth century. It rises from up the rock to the height of some thirty-eight feet and is made magnificent by thirty-four towers and by eight gates. The city is of no unusual size, since it describes a circuit of less than two and a half miles, while an ingenious writer has pointed out that 'it would hardly occupy the space included between Oxford Street and Piccadilly on the north and south, and Park Lane and Bond Street on the east and west.'¹ It has a population of about 60,000 and may therefore be compared in extent to such places as Reading or York.

The haughty isolation of the city on a pedestal of gaunt limestone is marred by the growth of modern suburbs without the walls, especially on the side which lies to the north-west. These suburbs—composed largely of churches, convents, hospices, and villas—are

¹ Cook's *Handbook for Palestine*, p. 69. (London. 1911.)

glaring and ugly. The buildings, moreover, are homeless-looking and huddle near to the city like shivering outcasts. They conform to the Clapham-Cannes style of architecture, and the result breeds melancholy. David once described Mount Zion as 'beautiful for situation,' and the pedlar in building lots probably still urges this attraction for his 'eligible sites,' but the beauty of the old days has long vanished.

In general terms it may be noted that Jerusalem is built upon two nearly parallel hills, one lying to the west and one to the east. Between them is a glen—the Tyropœon Valley—which runs north and south from the Damascus gate to the Pool of Siloam. This valley is now nearly obliterated, being filled to the depth of some seventy feet with the debris and ruins of centuries.

On the northern end of the eastern hill—on that part known as Mount Moriah—stood Solomon's Temple. A little south of the temple and on a lower level was the great palace, while on the south end of the hill (on the area now called Ophel) rose the Jebusite stronghold captured by David. It will be remembered that in due course 'David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David.' Thus it is that at the present time it is very generally allowed that Ophel indicates the site of Mount Zion and the city of the Great King.

The western hill was occupied by the less ancient town of Jerusalem.

To the east of the two hills runs the valley of the Kedron, and on their western side 'the valley of Hin-nom, which is at the end of the valley of the giants.'

Two streets starting respectively from the Jaffa

Gate and the Damascus Gate intersect near the centre of the town and thus divide Jerusalem into four quarters, viz.: the quarters of the Mohammedans, the Christians, the Armenians, and the Jews.

When Abd-Khiba wrote a letter from Urusalem to Amenophis IV, King of Egypt, about three thousand four hundred years ago, neither he nor the Egyptian could have dreamed of the astounding and yet lamentable fortunes which were in store for the city. The letter remains, but of the place from which it was dispatched not a stone survives.

The history of the Holy City has been many times written and needs not to be again produced. Suffice it to say that the annals are the annals of a tragic town whose records are now of triumphant splendour and now of the dumbest misery. The voice of the city has been at one time as the blast of a trumpet and at another as the sob of the dying. For the most part, through many a sombre century, it has been the voice of lamentation and unhappiness.

Jerusalem has been from almost the dawn of its days the City of Sorrows, the city of 'the land of trouble and anguish.'

It was ever doomed to misfortune, ever marked out for vengeance and punishment, and ever shadowed by recurring ruin. The writers of sacred books were never weary of denouncing the city nor of prophesying its downfall. They employed an exhaustless imagery to describe its vileness, they shrieked against its iniquities and abominations, they broke out into rhapsodies upon its coming sufferings, and foretold for the place every

possible ill that could afflict the most hapless habitation of man.

‘Jerusalem shall become heaps’ the writing ran; ‘there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down’: and the prophecy has come true. The misery of the city has been abject and complete. No invention of malice, no subterfuge of revenge, could add to its woes. For century after century the cry from the watch-tower on the city wall has been ever the same: ‘Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.’

Jerusalem in the course of its history was besieged and destroyed by the Philistines and the Arabs, by the Persians and the Parthians, by the Kings of Egypt and the Kings of Assyria, by the Romans, by the Crusaders, and by the Moslems. Twice was its destruction so complete that it remained for periods of some sixty years a tumbled ruin, uninhabited and forgotten. Twice indeed did ‘the city sit solitary that was full of people,’ while only the howl of the wild beast broke the silence of the deserted streets.

It has been consumed by fire, rent by earthquake, and decimated by pestilence. Its people have been swept off in one sudden day by a blast of murder; and have rotted through long sickly weeks from drought and famine. It has been an arena for the display of the vilest passions that have possessed the human race, and the scene of at once the most glorious and the most degrading demonstrations of religion that the world has witnessed.

The old Jerusalem lies buried deep beneath the ruins of centuries. Dust and stones have obliterated the scenes of its past history. The ancient glories have been swept away ; the scenes and scars of bygone miseries are hidden out of sight.

In the telling of its story the voice of the city is faint almost to nothingness, for that which was said is true : ' Thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.'

V

WITHIN THE WALLS

THERE are no streets in Jerusalem—that is to say, there are no open roadways within the walls along which even the humblest carriage could make its way. The noise of wheels, therefore, is never to be heard within the Holy City. In the place of streets is a maze of lanes, and those who would traverse the same must do so on foot or seated on a donkey. The ass serves to keep one's feet out of the sour black filth with which the Golden City is paved during both 'the former' and 'the latter' rains as well as during any intermediate rains. There are difficulties, however, about the donkey, for the animal has his own views as to the way he should go, and declines to accept hints. As the beast, in forcing his path through the crowd, is no regarer of persons, the rider's progress is attended by a blizzard of abuse, unless he can announce his coming in the native tongue.

Riding of this kind also can hardly be classed as exercise in the open air, since it involves movement through a more or less solid medium. The traveller never sees the road; he is pushing through a living thicket: his face is brushed by the hairy chest of a

camel ; his foot, caught in the cloak of a hurrying Bedouin, is turned so violently round as to point backwards ; his leg is made wet by a mass of bleeding meat carried by a butcher ; his back is whitened by a sack of flour ; people lean against him and his donkey as they would against a wall ; they push him aside with their hands as if he were a stiff-hinged gate ; camels essay to walk through him, and at the end he feels that he is as clay that is rolled between the palms of the potter. The conclusion of the whole matter is that in Zion it is better to walk than to ride.

The whole of Jerusalem within the walls is made up of a tangle of lanes and byways of infinite and alarming complexity. If the modern city be likened to a formal garden, then this city is a jungle full of disquieting shadows and will-o'-the-wisps of strange light. The traveller wanders to and fro expecting every moment to find himself in an honest roadway open to the sky, but such a fair street he will never find. Jerusalem appears to be composed wholly of intriguing, bewildering slums. Let the curious turn aside but a few paces from a known path and he may be lost for hours. This is one of the most impressive and memory-haunting things in the sorrowful city—this human labyrinth, devilish in its ingenuity, baffling by its maniacal aimlessness, mocking in its elfish trickery.

The ways of Jerusalem are narrow, are for the most part paved, are inconsequent, and full of the unexpected. Certain lanes are made up of wide stone steps that descend into a valley of dirtiness and then mount up on the opposite side. Other causeways are between high blank

walls, like the passages in a fortress. These walls, originally grey in colour, are shaded with every tone of uncleanness, are made blue in parts by mildew, or show patches of delightful green where weeds or tufts of grass are growing in the crannies.

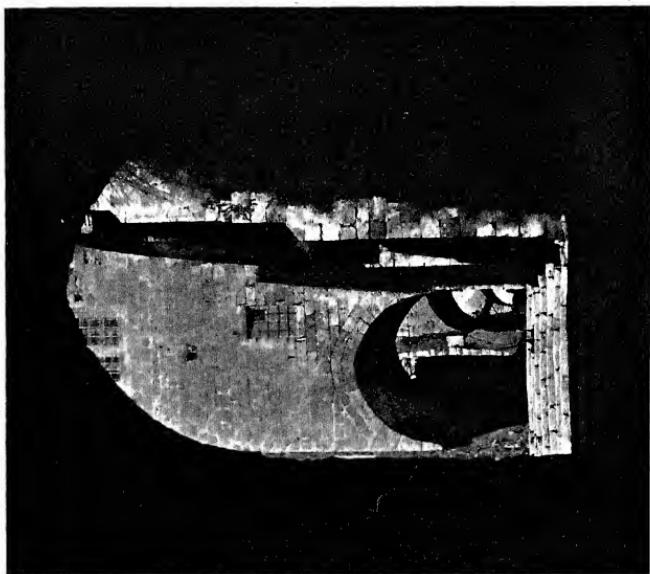
The houses are all of sullied stone and few are of the same shape. Some appear to have a door but no windows ; others would seem to have only windows and to be entered by some invisible portal. There are arched passages with possibly a grilled peep-hole in the black of the arch and the glimmer of a lamp behind the bars. There are long vaulted ways, grimy as railway tunnels, lit by holes in the roof through which a ray of sun may occasionally be shot. There are tunnels, too, that pass under houses, the door of the house being hidden in the darkest shadow of the passage. In the open lanes are windows far up on the walls that project over the causeway and are elaborately screened. There are pretentious windows of stone also supported on stone corbels, as well as windows with little crumpled balconies hanging to them which may be full of flowers. One comes upon fragments of old walls, upon ash-white ruins, upon ancient stone fountains, upon cavern-like cellars the mouldy breath of whose mouths fills the lane with the chill of death.

There are, moreover, mysterious narrow stairs that turn furtively out of sight between suspicious walls. Up one such forbidding stair a man, in a long dull robe, was making his way. His head was hidden in a hood and he carried a staff in his hand. He might have been the impenitent thief, who died at Golgotha, slinking home.

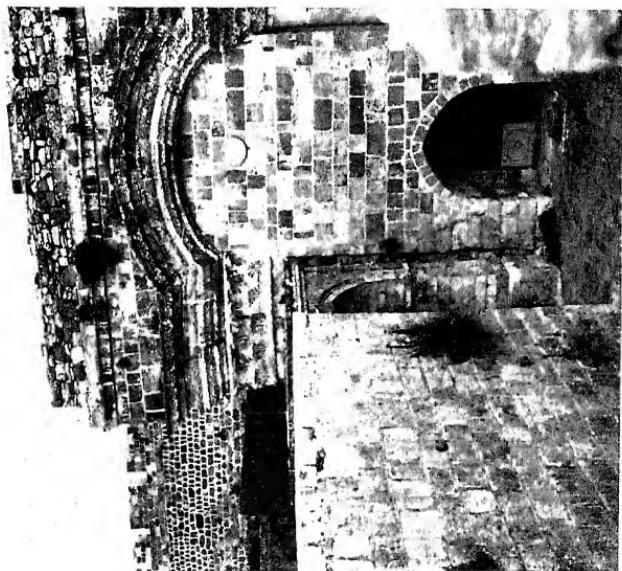
At high noon when the sun is clear, the by-ways of the city are slashed with intense shadows and intense lights. At the end of a vaulted passage, black as the pit, may be a white courtyard dazzling almost to blindness. On many a grimy path are pools of sun as brilliant as spilt quicksilver, while in the abysmal tunnels a ray of light coming through a crack in the roof looks like a tie-rod of white-hot metal.

The lanes of the residential quarters are for the most part silent and little occupied. The few passers-by move slowly and affect a meditative or depressed bearing. Children are not much in evidence, and such as are met with appear tired and listless. It is evident that the day has not yet come when 'the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.'

In the business quarters, in the lanes of shops, there is ever, on the other hand, a restless and congested crowd. The shops are the shops of the East, mere square gaps in a wall filled with disordered merchandise which, spread out mostly on the floor or dangling from the walls, fills the dull way with that infinite variety of tint and colour, of perfume and stench, which is characteristic of the oriental bazaar. The shops are equipped with ancient weatherworn shutters of archaic type, hanging at various angles from their hinges. As I did not see a single new shop shutter throughout the whole of Jerusalem I conclude that this article, like certain wine, must attain to age before it can be of service. Some of the shutters are so venerable and infinitely patched that it would be more easy to believe that they belonged to the actual City of David



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THE GOLDEN GATE, JERUSALEM: FROM THE INSIDE

than to accept the relics which are seriously accredited to the time of that monarch.

Above each shop front is a little wooden sill or weatherboard to keep off the sun and the rain. To assist these ends the board is supplemented by miscellaneous bits of canvas, flaps of cloth, and dangling rags. It thus happens that on a rainy day no place drips like the bazaar in Jerusalem. The water streams off each eave in a thousand threads, like the down-coming strands in the warp of a loom, and trickles from a million points of frayed rag as from the leaves of a drenched tree. The mud of the flags is splashed upwards as the jets strike the stones, so that the wayfarer when caught in a shower can only escape a complete soaking by keeping well in the rain. So long as he keeps in the mere rain he is comparatively dry, but when he is out of it he is under a cascade of yellow and penetrating water which is derived from the concentrated shop roofs of Jerusalem.

The crowd in the bazaar is miscellaneous and more mixed probably than any crowd in the world. Conspicuous is the Jew who should be—although he is not—the rightful inhabitant of Jerusalem. He is known by his broad-brimmed felt hat, by his cap trimmed with fur, by his dressing-gown-like robe, by his coat of tawdry plush, and by his peculiar side-locks of hair. These greasy love-locks, which may become a youthful Jew of seventeen, look very eerie in an ancient man.

Most of these Jews appear to be very poor; a curiously large proportion of them is very old, while there are few who are not abject-looking or whose faces are not tinged by a sallow melancholy. They are miserable

representatives of those fierce, sturdy, hard-fighting Hebrews who cut their way into this mountain fastness and held for so long the stronghold of Zion.

Conspicuous also is the Greek priest, robed in black, with long hair like a woman, the effeminate locks being surmounted by a ridiculous saucepan-shaped hat. Many are of priestly bearing, but others are so unintelligent-looking and so brutish in feature as to afford the most unpleasant type of man to be found in Jerusalem.

As an agreeable contrast to these unwholesome cell-bred manikins is the Bedouin with his keen eye, his well-squared shoulders, his sunburnt limbs, and his splendid carriage. He wears a coloured cloth over his head bound with a cord made of black wool or of camel's hair. His robe may be tattered and patched, his shoes may be mere flaps of dirty leather, but he is in every step of his stride a strong man, free and self-reliant.

Moslems with white turbans and dark robes form the most picturesque element in the bazaar crowd. Some are so grave and shrewd of countenance that they may be learned professors from a forgotten university. Others look like necromancers and only need the crucible, the alembic, and the strange-shaped bottles to start the distilling of the elixir of life. Some are like little goblin merchants, 'that peep and that mutter' as they dart about the streets in search of bargains.

In the crowd, too, are veiled women in black who would seem to be items detached from a funeral pageant, as well as bent old crones who, upon the addition of a

conical hat, a red cloak, and a cat, would turn at once into witches.

There are, moreover, mixed up with the camels, the sheep and the donkeys, Turkish soldiers, gilded officials, negroes, dervishes, yellow-skinned, almond-eyed Mongolians, crafty-looking Greeks, Syrians with tarboushes on their heads and the clothes of the Hackney bank-holiday maker on their bodies, heavily clad Russians, tourists with field-glasses, cameras, and guide-books, solemn lank-haired pilgrims from the frontiers of India who have drifted here from Mecca. Last of all the visitor may meet—as I did—a small Sudanese boy who, in spite of the cold, was naked but for a rag, and who, perched on the extreme end of a donkey, was grinning with exquisite delight. He was the sole embodiment in the crowd of the happy state ‘of having nothing and yet possessing all things.’

That by-way in Jerusalem which is the best known, and to which the traveller will turn with the greatest expectancy, is the Via Dolorosa, the Path of Pain, along which Christ is supposed to have walked in His weary progress from the judgment hall to the place of crucifixion. Did such a lane exist among the mazes of the city it would indeed be the most dolorous and the most sacred footway in the world.

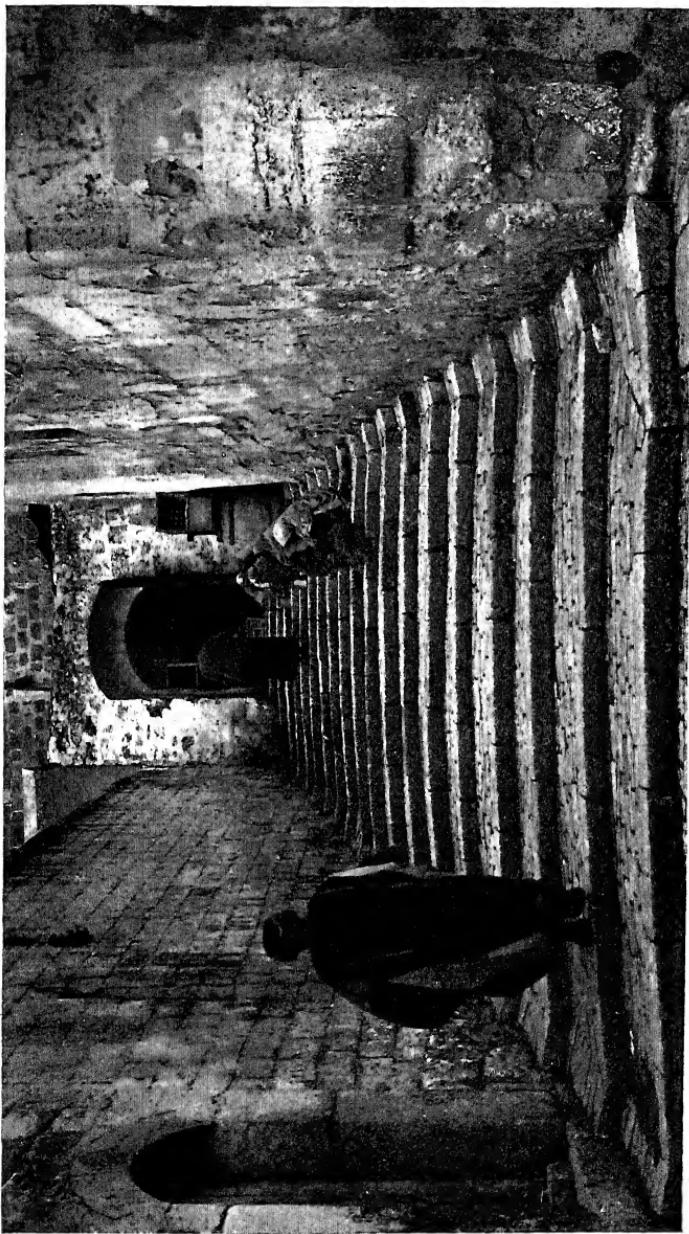
The Via Dolorosa which pilgrims come thousands of miles to see is a quite modern lane. For some distance it is a paved passage between blank walls; it then changes to a mean street, and at last ends ignobly in the bazaar in a vaulted passage full of noisome shops. Along this dirty and callous street the Stations of the

Cross are marked by inscribed stones let into the walls or by other insignia. Here, for example, is indicated the exact spot where the cross was laid upon Jesus. Here is the place where He sank under the weight of His burden. Here is the point in the lane where He met His mother, and a little farther on is the spot where Veronica wiped the sweat from His brow. A picturesque medieval house, projecting over the street, is pointed out as the house of the rich man Dives, while near the fifth station there is—built into the wall—a stone which has a hollow in it caused by the pressure of the hand of Christ.

The Via Dolorosa is a mere fiction of the Christian Church, a lane of lies, a path of fraud. The present road does not appear to have come into existence until the sixteenth century, and, according to Dr. Sanday, 'its course has been frequently changed.'¹ It is a great commercial asset, however, so it can be understood that when next its direction is modified there will be keen competition to turn it to individual advantage.

The magnitude of the deception can be realised if it be remembered that the site of Calvary is not known, that some forty years after the crucifixion of Christ Jerusalem was so utterly destroyed by Titus as to be left 'a mass of scarcely distinguishable ruins,' that it remained a mere heap of stones for some sixty years, when the Emperor Hadrian built upon the waste a Roman city and made of Jerusalem a purely heathen colony, and that it was not until some three hundred years after the death of Christ, when every trace of the city of His

¹ *Sacred Sites of the Gospels*, p. 55, by W. Sanday, D.D. (Oxford. 1903.)



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time had been obliterated, that any attempt was made to discover the so-called sacred sites. In the meantime the valley crossed by the reputed Via Dolorosa had been buried beneath the debris of centuries to the depth of some sixty feet. Dean Stanley speaks of the constant satisfaction he derived from the thought 'that the old city itself lies buried twenty, thirty, forty feet below these wretched shops and receptacles for Anglo-Oriental conveniences.'¹

The heartless cruelty of the deception can be judged by watching the conduct of a devout body of poor Russian pilgrims who, after a lifetime of thrift, have been able to save enough money to make the journey to Jerusalem. Their sincerity is beyond doubt, their trust is that of a child, their faith is pathetic and unquestioning. Tears stream down their faces as they walk along the Path of Pain, wrung by the belief that they are actually treading in the footsteps of Christ. At each 'station' they kneel and pray; they kiss the wall, or, falling down in the dirt, kiss the filth of the road.

It may be held that this outpouring of religious fervour, this profound, worshipful homage, this ecstasy of devotion is not lessened in worth by the chicanery and falsehood with which it is surrounded; but the argument is unavailing.

There is consolation, however, in the thought that somewhere in Jerusalem, buried fathoms deep beneath dust and stone, there lies in supreme peace the ineffable path actually trodden by the feet of Christ, and that

¹ *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 167. (London. 1881.)

‘none shall pass through it for ever and ever.’ It lies hidden from the eyes of the mumming priest and is safe for ever from that tawdry oblation of gilt image and brazen lamp which marks the Church’s appreciation of a sacred place.

VI

THE CULT OF THE BEGGAR

IT is in Jerusalem of all cities of the world that begging reaches to its highest development as an art and craft. There has been a school of begging at this city for some fifteen hundred years. For fifteen centuries devout pilgrims have been making their way to Jerusalem, with more or less travail, from every part of the earth. They have come for the good of their souls. They have come to do penance for their sins. They have come in the hope of attaining more assuredly to eternal peace. The pilgrimage has been one profound act of self-sacrifice, one intense self-torturing outburst of religious fervour. When the devout man reaches the sacred spot what can he do ? He can throw himself upon the ground, he can pray, he can either in fact or by metaphor rend his clothes and put dust and ashes upon his head, he can light candles, he can bestow money upon the ever-grasping church, and he can give alms to the poor. The last act is so open, so obvious, so immediately gratifying, that it must prove to be a conspicuous detail in the devotee's ritual.

Beggars, therefore, have been from early days as

necessary in Jerusalem as the altar, the relic, and the cloud of incense. Besides the great army of the really devout there are the would-be devout, the temporarily devout, and the merely curious. These latter also give alms—not for the good of their souls or the comfort of the mendicant, but because almsgiving is a part of the life of the place, a feature of the visit, a 'thing to do.'

The beggars of Jerusalem have had to deal with a miscellaneous host of people, countless as the sands of the seashore, who speak in unknown tongues, and to whom petition by mere word of mouth would be ineffectual. The mendicants, therefore, have had to appeal to the sympathy of the visitor by means of gesture, by dramatic miming, by pose, and by subtle suggestion.

The art of begging does not consist of mere whining and snivelling, nor of the mere bald display of bodily affliction. The woman who in the streets of London shuffles after a ruddy citizen with a box of matches in her hand, and the piping drawl, 'Kind gentleman, gimme a penny to buy bread,' is no artist. She is a mere untutored creature of convention who would starve in Jerusalem in a week. Her method is too crude, her whine is artificial and stereotyped by custom; it expresses neither supplication nor suffering, but merely conforms to the current conception of the mode of address proper for beggars. It is so far removed from pathos as to be on the border of the ridiculous. In England a blind man, wrapped in a thick coat and comforter, will stand against a wintry wall with the neat inscription 'Blind' on his chest, and with a dog before him covered by a little rug. The dog has a tin attached to his neck for

alms. The man's eyes are closed and so are the dog's. The man does not even hold out his hand, but repeats from time to time, in a nerveless monotone, the phrase 'Pity the poor blind,' while he rocks alternately from one foot to the other to keep himself warm. People give him money mechanically, in response to a congenitally acquired habit—not because he is blind but because he seems bored, or more often still because his dog seems bored and the chink of a coin in his tin wakes him up.

Now in Jerusalem the begging of the blind is a dramatic act, a human tragedy in one vivid pose. Out of a damp shadow in a lane there darts a haggard youth, pale as a nun, emaciated as a mummy, with wild hair and outstretched bony arms. His eyelids are staring open, showing two opaque eyeballs which are like knobs of white chalk. He is blind as a statue is blind. He is nearly naked. He turns towards you a face distorted with expectancy, as if it were you and you alone who could restore his sight. He seems as if he had been waiting for you in the lane for years. He is led by a cachectic girl, a mere thing of rags, whose lined face is luminous with excitement and hope. There is no whining for money, no banal platitude about 'the poor blind.' She whispers to herself 'Help is at hand,' and points first to the youth's dead eyes and then to the sun. No one could pass this boy and girl unheeded. The onlooker feels that he is one of the dramatis personæ, and that without him in the act of giving alms the group of living statuary is incomplete.

I recall also a blind woman by the roadside, near to St. Stephen's Gate. She was young and not uncomely.

She sat in the dust with her hands dropped listlessly in her lap like the hands of the dead. She uttered no sound, she held out no tin mug. The sun falling on her shapely head threw her empty eye sockets into deep shadows. She merely rocked her body to and fro, a picture of utter loneliness and intolerable misery, a conception of the outcast who had lost all hope and had long ceased to look for help. This was not mere area gate, suburban begging, it was a display of art. I watched her for some time. She did well and earned more in an hour than the conventional pavement-tapping blind man would have earned in Jerusalem in a week.

The most dreadful spectacle in connection with the blind was in the vaults of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Among the foundations of that building is a dark cavern. It is reached by rough steps cut in the rock. They are steep and drop out of sight into the gloom. The cave is converted into a rude chapel, called the Chapel of the Invention. When we visited the place a faint light fell upon the first three steps, and on each step a hooded figure was crouching with its back to the wall. The three were alike. They appeared to be men and to be very old. They were dressed each in a gown of sackcloth, the hood of the gown being pointed like the corner of a sack. When they turned their faces towards the light it could be seen that all were blind. They seemed to belong to the underworld and to have never attained nearer to the open air. To them might have been applied the words of the prophet Micah: 'they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth.' They muttered something that the dragoman told me



A STREET IN JERUSALEM

was 'We are poor, hungry, and blind.' There was something sinister in these three shrouded figures sitting in a row like ghouls at the mouth of a tomb. Three ravens perched on a bough in a charred wood could not have made a more horrid portent of disaster. I gave the nearest ghoul money in order to rid myself of the awful incubus imposed by their presence. It was a relief, when we were out of hearing, to see the three grey figures wrangling over the coins, snarling and spitting like cats and grabbing at one another with claw-like hands.

In a place like the Holy Land, where the profession of begging is so highly cultivated, one must expect to come upon amateurs and imitators as well as upon actors of feeble attainment. An instance of the incomplete beggar was afforded us in the streets of Bethlehem. We there encountered a plump, jovial-looking girl of ten or twelve whose ruddy cheeks and sturdy limbs betokened good living. As we approached she promptly twisted her features into what was intended to be an expression of intense misery. As her face was naturally merry this attempt to depict a paroxysm of woe was exceedingly ludicrous, and when, with her hands clasped as in prayer, she whined, 'My little sister is at home in the house crying for bread,' we could only burst into laughter. Now some time previously I had asked a resident in Jerusalem why the native children went to the mission schools, and he had replied cynically that they went there 'to learn enough English to beg.' This girl appeared to provide an illustration of the statement, but on inquiry we found that she had never been to a mission school; she did not know a single word of English

beyond those embodied in her distressful speech, and the meaning of the sentence itself she had forgotten. As a beggar she was a failure. Her stock-in-trade was too small ; her repertoire too limited. The episode, however, afforded her consummate amusement, and whenever the dragoman inquired, in Arabic, after the sister who was shrieking for bread she became convulsed with laughter. She was given money, for although she was not a success as a mendicant, she showed some promise as a humourist.

The cities are not the only resorts of beggars. The brotherhood and the sisterhood of the derelict are spread throughout the length of the land. Wherever the tourist goes they go. They never lose sight of him. If he mounts up to a hilltop they are there. If he descends into the bowels of the earth they are there also. As the prophet Jeremiah writes : 'They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets . . . they laid wait for us in the wilderness.' This universal demand for baksheesh, from Dan to Bathsheba, might have been in the mind of that other prophet when he wrote 'every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards.'

The beggars in the country and about the outskirts of towns are mere tramps and footpads, however, when compared with the finished artist who is to be found in Jerusalem. In that city the beggars particularly favour one especial lane. It is the one that leads down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This lane is the very end of the pilgrim's way, the end of the road to which a thousand paths converge from every quarter of the world. As the way is steep it is cut into steps and paved.

On either side is a blank wall. On the steps where they touch the wall the beggars lie, huddled close together in a brown, damp, feebly writhing mass. They seem to have been blown into the gutter and to have become heaped up there against the wall, as are leaves and litter after a wind. Some are lying on the ground, some are sitting, but all are in positions of extreme unease. They might have been thrown against the wall by the force of an explosion and be lying there with bent limbs and broken backs.

They seem to ooze down the steps in a thick continuous mass, made up of inharmonious human ingredients. Here is a cinder-grey hand stretched out. All the fingers are gone, but there is a thumb left which keeps moving to and fro. Spread out on the flags are paralysed limbs looking like shrivelled tree branches, although it is difficult to say to which bundle of tatters any two belong. Here is a club foot dangling over a stone. It is so livid with the cold as to resemble a purple root. Faintly seen, under the shade of a cowl, is a face without a nose and without eyes. Near by a bony knee projects with a fungating tumour on it like a crushed tomato. There are horrible sores, too, effectively displayed as if they were possessions of price. Above all there comes ever from this medley of maimed folk a low, monotonous sound as dreary as the moaning of the winter wind around a lonely house.

There was one episode associated with begging in Jerusalem which impressed me more than any other, and which I can even now not recall without a choking in the throat. It was near the twelfth hour of the day—

that is, about sunset. A casual dragoman and I were plodding along a street in Jerusalem which I can only remember as rendered in grey and made miserable by the wet. The folk of the town were hurrying by with bent heads and that callous disregard of everything but themselves which is characteristic of people in a driving rain.

On a sudden I was accosted by a spectre of a girl of about fourteen. She was lean and pale and clad in thin black clothes which, being wet, seemed to be pasted on her body. She had curious silver-grey eyes, the tint of the scales of a fish. She held out her hands as if she would grip me by the coat, while in tones of intense eagerness she asked: 'Are you English?' I said 'I am.' She then gasped out 'Oh do help me! I am in such trouble. My father is lying dead in the house and I am all alone.' She had the wild look of a maniac; she seemed distracted with grief and stupefied with misery. She was panting with haste as if she had been running to and fro in the rain to find some one who understood her language and to whom she could appeal for help. I could see at a flash the dead man alone in a mean room empty of furniture and food; I could see the open door, the wet street. My profession has made me familiar with tragic moments, but I remember few more dramatic than this. The girl's unnatural voice made one's flesh creep. Her strange grey eyes were terrible.

I said I would come with her at once. The dragoman held up a restraining hand and smiled. The girl had vanished. I asked of the man, 'Is this not true?' He

replied, 'No. She recognised me. I have heard this story twenty times. She is the finest beggar in Jerusalem.' Indeed she was. So fine, in fact, that I often wondered if her hurrying away was not due to some tardiness in my response, there being not a moment for her to lose.

She was a Greek, I was told, and her father was alive and well. Her command of English was perfect. Her command of emotional expression would have thrilled even Euripides. Never has the art of begging attained to greater finish even in Jerusalem.

VII

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

THE goal of all good pilgrims who come to Jerusalem is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. For some fifteen centuries it has been the dream of the lives of millions of people to enter the door of this church and to seek in its holy shadows for that peace which passeth all understanding. It is every year the dream of thousands still, the one ambition of their days, to see Jerusalem before they die.

It is claimed that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre contains within its walls the actual hillock of bare ground that was stained with the blood of Christ and that it shows still the mark left by the setting up of the cross. It is maintained, moreover, that the church is built upon the site of that garden where was a tomb, 'hewn out in the rock,' in which the body of Christ was placed, and that this tomb stands in actual existence upon the floor of the building to this day.

This claim of the church has been for long the subject of persistent and disquieting controversy, which has led to no other result than to make it evident to ordinary folk that the exact site of the crucifixion and the locality

of the holy sepulchre are unknown and, further, that they are not likely ever to be discovered. As has already been said (page 54) the Jerusalem of old was practically obliterated and buried in ruins. 'Zion,' says Micah, '... shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps.' The foundations of the ancient walls are in some places one hundred and thirty feet below the present surface. It was not until some three centuries after the crucifixion that the Emperor Constantine took steps to discover the holy sites among the acres of rubbish which represented the old city. Those whom he commissioned to fulfil this duty had to find those sites—and they found them. They had also to hold in mind the fact that the site discovered must of necessity be a suitable spot for the building of a church. It is curious that the ground on which the present church stands was already occupied by a temple to Venus, built by Hadrian when he made Jerusalem a Roman city. The true cross was discovered by the Empress Helena by means of a dream, and its identity was made evident by the miraculous powers of healing which it was found to possess. The story, when read in the light of the twentieth century, is utterly unconvincing.

Moreover, the present site of the Holy Sepulchre, if genuine, must have been outside the so-called 'second wall,' that wall, indeed, which surrounded the city in the time of Christ. Such fragments of this wall as have been discovered suggest to many that it enclosed the Holy Sepulchre. To exclude it the wall must be assumed to make an abrupt and remarkable bend which is hard to explain and which would give to

this 'second wall' a general direction followed by no other boundary, new or old, that encompasses Jerusalem.

Calvary, moreover, as exposed in the church, is of bare rock, and in this rock the sockets for the three crosses have been cut—as it would seem—with no mean labour by mason's tools. This may or may not be consistent with the rough-and-ready way in which common thieves and disturbers of the peace were put to death in the days of Herod.

There is a rival site to the present one, known as the Garden Tomb or Gordon's Calvary. The latter title is due to the fact that the claims of this particular place to be the real scene of the crucifixion were favoured by General Gordon. The place, which is 'nigh to the city' and close to the Damascus Gate, is one of the few pretty spots in the suburbs of Jerusalem. In a secluded and unpretentious garden is a tomb hewn in the wall of rock which forms one boundary of the retreat. Above the garden is a low green mound which is claimed to be the Golgotha of old days. Every feature of the place fits in with the Bible narrative, and the simple little spot enables one to realise, in a graphic and natural manner, every detail which that narrative lays bare. One can picture Mary stooping down and looking into the sepulchre when she saw the 'two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.' She came, with 'the other Mary,' before the sun was up, just as the day 'began to dawn,' and it can be understood how, in the uncertain light, in the shadow of the rock, the countenance of the

angel would be luminous 'like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.'

Apart from this, however, there is not the slightest ground upon which to support the conclusion that this quiet nook outside the city wall represents the actual scene of the great world-moving drama.

It may be surmised, nevertheless, that should later exploration reveal the fact that the 'second wall' *does* include the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, there will be a rush of clergy to this modest spot, and after those bitter wranglings which have ever characterised the Christian Church in Jerusalem, the garden will be covered with marble and bricks, altars will be raised under a cathedral dome, and the tomb will be decorated with brass, tinsel, and gilt, and lit with lamps. The so-called sacred spot will be robbed of every cherished feature, while in place of the hushed, bird-haunted garden and the empty grave there will be a blatant fabric, comparable only to a Hindoo temple.

The structures composing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are built upon two natural terraces of rock which rise out of the valley. A spot on the higher terrace is assumed to be the place of the crucifixion. The tomb in which Christ was laid is said to have been hewn in the rock which forms the vertical face of this terrace. In order to obtain a level foundation for the original churches 'the rock of the upper terrace was cut away in such manner as to leave the grave of Christ and the place of the crucifixion standing out as isolated masses of rock above the general level.'¹ On the

¹ Macmillan's *Guide to Palestine and Syria*, p. 45. (London. 1908).

lower terrace, which was considered to represent the garden of the Bible narrative, the churches were built about the year 330. Two churches were erected by Constantine—a round church (now represented by the Rotunda), in the centre of which was the tomb, and a basilica, dedicated to the Cross, which was placed to the east, but in what exact position is unknown. The artificially isolated mass of rock, called Mount Calvary, was enclosed by a separate church in the fifth century. It thus happens that the whole configuration of the spot has been so altered that it is impossible to realise what was the natural aspect of the region before the work of destruction was commenced.

The great building is now a jumble of dark churches and gloomier chapels, burrowing deep into the earth. Every corner of the dismal, bewildered fabric appears to be shrinking from the light, and so far as any notion of the disposition of the ground can be obtained the structure might have been founded in the workings of a mine.

The history of this astonishing house of prayer has been written so many times that it need not be alluded to except to say that of the earlier churches none but the faintest traces are now existing. The various edifices which, from time to time, covered the site were repeatedly wrecked or destroyed with fire by fanatical heretics, and as repeatedly rebuilt by the orthodox devout. The most important restoration was carried out by the Crusaders during the first half of the twelfth century, when a building of great grandeur in the Romanesque style was erected. Finally came the calamitous fire of 1808 which swept the whole fabric

from the ground, leaving merely a shell of the Crusaders' once magnificent building. The present Church of the Holy Sepulchre, taken as a whole, dates only from 1810; so the visitor will see within its circuit but few relics of its tragic and turbulent past.

One would suppose that this church, this shrine of shrines, this sacred place which is 'the centre of the worship of Christendom,' would stand boldly upon a height, or would rise alone from a wide square, surrounded at a distance by adoring precincts. It should be too reverent a building to be touched or even approached by meaner walls. It should be an edifice that could be seen from afar off, and should spring, imperious and supreme, above all that struggling mass of ill-shaped houses, sycophant convents, and minor buildings which make up the body of Jerusalem. As a matter of fact the church is one of the least conspicuous buildings in the city. It is approached through a maze of lanes full of shops, and by that beggars' stair which has already been spoken of. This flight of steps, lined with the bodies of miserable men, leads to a little courtyard, very ancient-looking and full of light. Here at one end stands the church, while the other sides of the courtyard are occupied by heavy, irregular walls with unintelligible buttresses, mysterious windows, and fragments of older buildings incorporated in their substance. They belong to various chapels and convents and so crowd upon the church that there is nothing to be seen of it but two doors, two windows, a fascinating gallery, and a plain, squat dome. It is a mere disjointed fragment of a church in a small square.

The façade that is seen is curiously beautiful. It is built of biscuit-yellow stone and is just that shell of the twelfth-century church which escaped the fire of 1808. The windows are small and of unequal size. Both are sunk under heavy arches, while from the sill of one window to a stone ledge below there rests a common wooden ladder. Not even the dragoman could tell me why the ladder was there or who made use of it. There are two doors, but one is blocked with masonry. I suppose these doors are better known than are any church doors in Christendom, for photographs of the façade of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are as widely scattered as are pictures of the Eiffel Tower or of the Bridge of Sighs.

The open door may be looked upon as one of the most wonderful and most momentous portals in the world; the door most dreamed about, most told about, the nearest to the gate of Heaven. How mighty a crowd of rapt pilgrims have passed, with bowed heads and streaming eyes, beneath the gloriously carved lintel of this entry. If they could all come back again, from the Crusader in his coat of mail, from the Palmer in his muddied gown, to the Knight of Queen Elizabeth, to the Squire of King Charles, and thence to the personally conducted tourist with his red-covered Baedeker, the queue of breathless, prayer-muttering, or wonder-stricken folk would reach from this very door, in one long line, round the circumference of the earth.

On one side of the church is a venerable bell-tower with an open belfry, so that the bells can be seen. It was erected when Henry II was King of England and



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before Richard Cœur de Lion came to the throne, and so it has been looking down into the courtyard for over seven hundred years. On the other side of the court, opposite to the campanile, is a little flight of steps which leads to the Chapel of the Agony. At the foot of these stairs lies buried Philip D'Aubigné, an English Crusader who died in 1236. The stone over his resting-place has been cracked, not, as may be supposed, by fanatical paynims, but by Christian priests who had a desperate fight here as lately as 1902. The subject of the fray was this very Chapel of the Agony. It is an instructive picture—this furious encounter between ministers of Christ above the tomb of a Crusader.

There are certain sacred sites around the courtyard which will hardly impress the seeker after truth, as, for example, the olive tree which marks the spot where Abraham discovered the ram when about to sacrifice Isaac, or the hollow in a neighbouring pavement which indicates the position where the sacrifice was to have taken place.

The quadrangle in which the church stands is occupied by beggars and hawkers and by strolling priests. The beggars have, as a rule, some choice deformity to display, while the hawkers spread their goods upon the beautiful ruddy yellow stones of the Crusaders' Court. They have for sale pieces of incense, articles made of olive wood 'from the Mount of Olives,' crucifixes in mother-of-pearl, rosaries of every kind, and the never-failing picture-postcard.

On entering the church one steps from the bright outer world into a cavernous gloom. Immediately

in front of the visitor there arises out of the shadows a lofty shrine, lit partly by the yellow sparks of innumerable lamps and partly by the misty light which comes in through the entry. On either side of it are ghostly candelabra. Suspended from the as yet invisible ceiling are huge lamps in red bags. They look like red bats with folded wings hanging from the vault. Beneath lies the Stone of Unction upon which the body of Jesus was laid when it was anointed by Nicodemus with 'a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.' The stone, a slab of yellowish marble, is placed horizontally on the floor. It has often been changed and, indeed, the present slab was laid down as recently as 1808. Yet some Russian pilgrims who entered the church at the time threw themselves upon the ground and kissed this spurious marble ravenously.

A few steps beyond the Stone of Unction one enters the Rotunda, where stands the Holy Sepulchre. This Rotunda is a plain stone building of no interest, erected in 1810. The central dome which surmounts it is a structure of iron lined with painted tin. It was placed in position in 1868. The Rotunda, however, although quite modern, can claim to preserve with some precision the ground-plan of Constantine's Church of the Resurrection.

In the centre of the circular floor stands the tomb. My first view of it was marred by the fact that certain tourists were taking 'snapshots' of one another, using the Sepulchre of Christ as a background. I might pause to say that before I left the building it did not

strike me that this episode was incongruous. The rambling, half-buried fabric has little of the odour of sanctity about it. It does not seem to be appropriate to any sane religion. The few worshippers one came upon appeared to be possessed by a delirium of adoration which was morbid and pitiable. They dropped down before the sacred spots like felled cattle. They kissed the stones and moaned and muttered like creatures filled with dread rather than with the solace of a comforting presence. The principal church behind the Rotunda is ablaze with extravagant decoration, with brass and gilt, with silver and daubs of colour ; festoons of glass balls swing from the ceiling, the air is thick with hanging lamps, the altar is spiked over with candles, while at every possible spot on the wall is a picture in crude tints of red and blue. The place is more like a gaudy oriental divan decked for some noisy festival than a spot sacred to Him who said 'learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

Beyond the churches lies a confusing maze which seems to burrow under ground. There are dim crypts and cloisters, twilight passages full of deserted chapels, dark entries lit by the single spark of a swinging lamp, immense archways, colossal columns, mysterious stairs that are lost in the gloom of the roof, while everywhere are pictures in faded gilt and hanging candelabra in red bags.

At every turn is some sacred site, such as the Chapel of the Parting of the Raiment, the Chapel of the Derision, the Chapel of the Nailing to the Cross. Indeed the

Church of the Holy Sepulchre is, in its more visible parts, a show-place full of objects of doubtful authenticity, and, in its dark alleys and deep crypts, a kind of necromancer's cavern.

The Holy Sepulchre itself is enclosed in a tiny cabin-like chapel, built of marble, which is the colour of a yellow autumn leaf. It appears to have been reconstructed in its present form in 1810. The entrance is made garish by huge candlesticks holding painted candles, by hanging lamps, by rows of pictures, and by gilt and bright metal wherever the same can be introduced. One enters through a small door into the Chapel of the Angels, a lamp-lit place only eleven feet long by ten feet wide. Here is placed a stone set in marble, which is that which was rolled away by the angel from the mouth of the sepulchre. It is a part only of the same, for it may be remembered that the stone 'was very great.'

By stooping down one then passes through a low and narrow doorway into the Chapel of the Sepulchre. This is a mere cell about six feet long by six feet wide. At the end stands a Greek priest on guard. There is no suggestion of a sepulchre. The actual tomb—if tomb there be—is covered with marble and converted into an altar. The place is made brilliant by the light of many little lamps. There is the usual display of candles and figures, while in the centre of the altar is a very tawdry vase of china containing a posy of flowers. The recalling of the doubts which have been cast upon the genuineness of this place robs it of its due solemnity. It is merely a chapel in a cell, yet the cell represents the heart of Christendom and occupies

a spot which, through many centuries, has been the most revered in the world.

As we were leaving the chapel a woman, old, poor, and unhappy-looking, crept through the small door on her knees and, after kissing the stone that covered the tomb, laid her cheek upon it in the attitude of one who was tired but content. If she was secure in the belief that she had brought her trouble to the very spot where the body of Christ had lain, then the chapel is assuredly more than a place for the curious.

In the side wall of the chapel is an oval opening which suggests the orifice of a shooting-gallery at a fair. Sir Rider Haggard compares it to the hawse-pipe in the bow of a steamer. It is through this opening that the sacred fire appears at the festival of Easter. The Christian church in authority here encourages the belief that, at a certain moment on Easter Eve, fire descends from Heaven to the Holy Sepulchre, where it is received by a minister of God, who passes it, in the form of a lighted taper, to the yelling multitude without. This Easter scene has been described by many with varying degrees of disgust. It is only to be equalled by those degrading religious orgies which are to be met with in the forests of savage Africa.

At the Easter celebration the Rotunda is packed. Order is to some extent maintained by a strong force of Turkish soldiers, but in spite of these armed men some hundreds of worshippers have been crushed to death in past years. Before the episode of the fire takes place the devout endeavour to run round the tomb of Christ, leaping, jumping, and howling. Dean Stanley

describes this part of the Church ritual as 'a mixture of prisoner's base, football, and leap-frog.'¹

Later on the ceremony degenerates into a kind of witches' sabbath, the church being deafened by frenzied yells and screams, while its floor becomes as a boiling cauldron filled with arms and hands, with contorted, streaming faces, with writhing shoulders, backs, and knees. Of all accounts of this 'wholly irreligious tumult' that given by Mr. Hichens is the most vivid. He witnessed the orgy from a height in the Rotunda. 'I looked down,' he says, 'upon what seemed a vast crowd of demented people, who had thrown off every scrap of self-restraint, whose strange passions went naked for all to see, who were full of barbarous violence, savage expectation, and the blood lust.'² In such manner does the Church of Christ lead the followers of Jesus along the paths of peace in this age of enlightenment.

'Such,' writes Dean Stanley, 'is the Greek Easter—the greatest moral argument against the identity of the spot which it professes to honour—stripped indeed of some of its most revolting features, yet still, considering the place and the intention of the professed miracle, probably the most offensive imposture to be found in the world.' To this the man of God would reply—if he spoke candidly—that the fraud is perpetuated and the miracle maintained because 'there is money in it.'

There is but one thing in the Rotunda which the visitor will contemplate with satisfaction. At the back of the self-assertive, over-decked Holy Sepulchre is a

¹ *Loc. cit.* p. 461.

² *The Holy Land*, p. 291. (London. 1910.)

tiny chapel of dull wood. It belongs to the poor Copts and has been theirs since the sixteenth century. It is very quaint and is so simple, so childlike, and so modest, that it provides the only satisfactory religious feature that this great bazaar-like building can provide.

Many of the 'sights' in the church to which the dragoman would direct attention are merely wearisome. It is of no interest to view a ring of modern marble in a modern floor and to be told that it indicates the exact spot where Christ stood when he appeared to Mary Magdalene in the Garden; on which occasion the poor, tearful woman, for a moment, supposed him to be the gardener. It is of even less interest to take a stick and to push it through a hole in a wall for the purpose of touching a fragment of stone which is said to be a part of the Column of the Scourging. How this particular piece of stone came to be discovered among the heaps of like stones which made up the ruins of Jerusalem we are not informed. It appears to have frequently changed both its size and its colour, while, on the other hand, the claim is made that the genuine column stands in the church of Santa Prassede at Rome.

Another 'sight' beloved by dragomans is provided in the Catholicon, where is a cup containing a flattened ball. This article indicates the centre of the world and will be viewed with curiosity by the astronomer and the maker of maps. We declined to see the dark place in which Christ, together with the two thieves, was imprisoned while the preparations for the crucifixion were being made. We also declined to see the stocks in which the feet of Christ were placed, as well as the

two impressions on the stone which show the actual footprints of the Redeemer. These things lie rotting in an intellectual dungeon of the world, buried from the wholesome light of modern reason and stifled under the shadow of imposture and superstition.

VIII

THE THIEF'S CHAPEL AND CALVARY

AMONG the score and more chapels which spring out, with nightmare effect, at every turn and bend in the maze of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre there is none so picturesque as the Chapel of St. Helena. It is a subterranean place, approached by some thirty steps, and is lit by a dome supported upon four stunted pillars of immense girth. Each pillar is capped by an enormous top-heavy capital in the Byzantine style. It is the architecture of deformity. The chapel is very old. Some parts date from the seventh century, while most that is evident in pillar and vaulted roof belongs to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The interior of the dome is decorated by crude paintings. Ghostly frescoes, strange by reason of great age, cover the walls. On the floor is a rough stone pavement, while from the dome hang festoons of chains bearing glass and porcelain balls. In the centre a great lamp is suspended in a red bag.

At the far end of the crypt are roughly daubed shrines of warped wood devoted to a curiously assorted couple—to the Empress Helena and the Penitent Thief. In each shrine is an altar with a lighted lamp. It is interesting

to note that the altar of the Empress is a little larger than the altar of the thief. It would be still more interesting to know how this subtle gradation in size was arrived at and upon what standard of worshipfulness it was based.

There is an intense fascination about this silent and mysterious cavern. It has the aspect of extreme, mumbling old age. There is a deathlike chill in the air, a clamminess that creeps about the place like a mist. There is a smell of the grave, the slimy odour of damp earth. The flames of the two little lamps are so low that they appear to be suffocated by an insipid atmosphere which has remained unchanged for a thousand years. The place is buried and forgotten ; the woodwork is wrinkled like a parchment ; the beams are made leprous-looking by a pallid mould ; the walls are as sodden as if the place were filled every day, roof high, by a noisome tide.

Surely in the depths of moonless nights, when the little lamps have spluttered out, and the light has faded from the strings of glass balls, there must be some recalling of the past in this astounding caravanserai where, as in an inn, there rest for a while the ghosts of the strangest of all comrades—an empress and a thief. It must be to such a place as this that the words of Habakkuk the prophet are fitting :

‘ For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.’

One other place, a place of supreme concern, remains to be seen. This is the place of the Crucifixion. It is reached, curious to say, by ascending a flight of stone stairs near to the door of the church. Golgotha, or

Calvary, is no longer open to the sky, but it is so enclosed as to make the floor of a low, vault-like chapel from the roof of which innumerable lamps are hanging. With every wish to be reverent I must confess that my first impression of this most sacred spot was the impression of a lamp shop, an idea which was encouraged by the overpowering smell of oil and by the chattering of a number of tourists who surveyed the chapel and the lamps with the air of intending purchasers.

The actual spot of the Crucifixion is occupied by an altar, the natural rock being here overlaid with marble. An opening, lined with silver, shows the socket in the stone where the cross of Christ is said to have been inserted. It is very small. The sites of the crosses of the two thieves are also indicated. The three crosses are so close together that the outstretched arms of those who suffered on that day must have overlapped. Near by is a brass tablet which, when pushed aside, reveals the so-called 'cleft in the rock.' The cleft—a mere groove—is lined with ruddy marble and is but a few inches deep. It totally fails to make real the vivid account given by St. Matthew when Jesus cried again with a loud voice. 'And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened.'

The chapel is decorated with a restless straining after display. A painted ceiling surmounts lavishly painted walls. Seen through an atmosphere shimmering with brass and gilt, with silver and coloured glass, there is a vague vision of bright marble, of shining images and crosses, and a never-ending host of candles and lamps.

One would associate the conception of Calvary with a hushed, contemplative, peace-assuring spot and not with this strident showroom, hung about with the jingling gewgaws of a country fair. While it may serve to represent the craft of the priest it certainly fails to realise the spirit of the place. It is as incongruous as would be a mother's lullaby played on a cornet. Those who find comfort in the belief that

‘ There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall ’

and who would keep that vision clear and unspoiled,
should never come nigh to Jerusalem.

IX

THE ROOF OF THE CHURCH

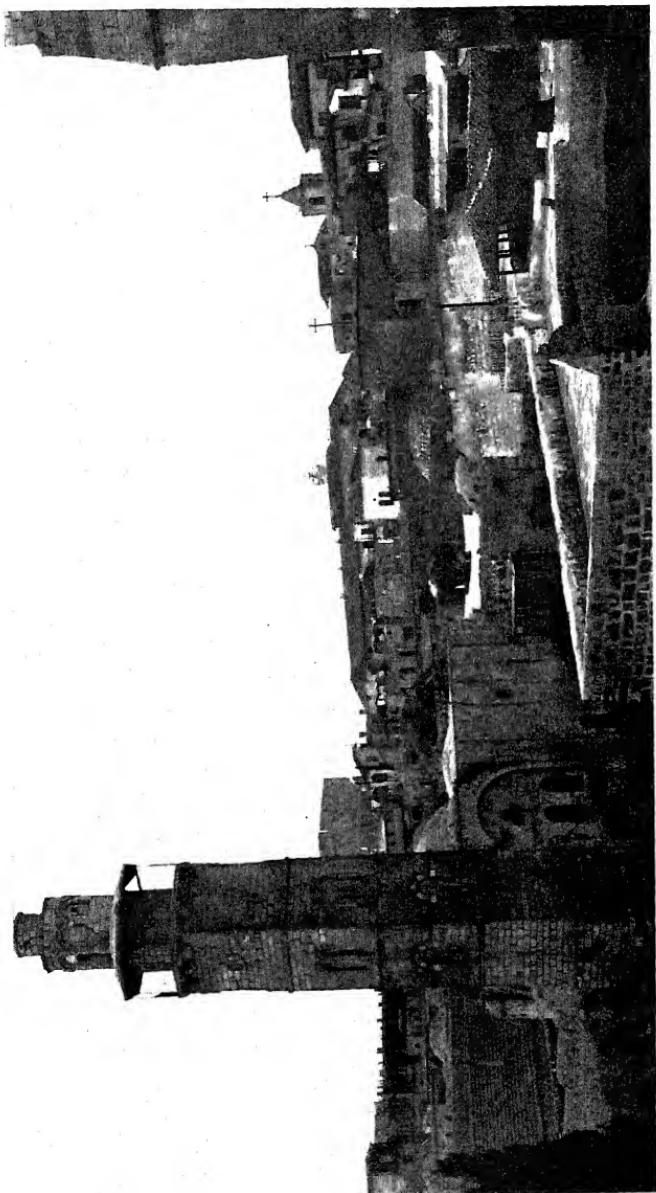
THE view of Jerusalem from the roof of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is very gracious. After wandering through the twilight passages of the church, and after breathing a languid atmosphere of incense and oil, it is well to be in the sun again and under the clear air of heaven. Stretching eastwards is a view across the city to the encircling wall, and beyond the wall to the open country. Jerusalem appears as a pale yellow city, made up of domes and towers and box-like squares of whitened masonry with basin-shaped roofs and black chinks for windows. There is no sign of a street, but here and there is a glimpse of a quiet courtyard with possibly a splash of green in it. As a relief to the stacks of pale cubes, rising at all levels and facing all ways, will be a few patches of brown tiles, a grey shutter or an iron balcony, a sentinel-like cypress and even a palm or two. There are a few roofs of vivid red, a few walls of startling blue, while many crosses stand out against the cloudless sky.

Beyond the city, across the Valley of Jehosaphat, are the Mount of Olives and the country that leads to

Bethany and the Jordan, while on the far horizon stand the Mountains of Moab. It is a poor, cheerless, unlovely country, dun-coloured like a beggar's cloak, barren and littered with stones. There is, at the moment, not a sign of a human being on the sorry roads, and a vision of such a land as this must have filled the eyes of the prophet when he wrote: 'Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.'

The Mount of Olives is a brown ridge, very commonplace, humble, and suburban. It is, I think, the least beautiful hill I can call to mind. Compared to a sleek, green down or the tree-covered 'hanger' it is harsh and ugly. It is just a dry, stony hill, with a few starved olive trees and many modern buildings on its slopes, with a copious Jewish cemetery at its foot, like a vast stone-mason's yard, and, on its summit, a belvedere and a barrack as represented by the huge Russian tower and the new German hospice. This Olivet, this path to the village of Bethany, this way leading down to the Jordan, are all sacred sites of unquestionable genuineness. This is the country that was traversed by the feet of Christ; this is the very view that, in every dip and knoll, was familiar to His eyes. This is a veritable part of the Holy Land, a little changed it may be as to its surface, but quite unaltered in its general outline. It is one of the few true things in Palestine, and one very wholesome to look upon after that surfeit of glamour and imposture which the church beneath one's feet provides.

It was in this plain, unassuming country that the religion of Christ was taught. It was taught in the



JERUSALEM: VIEW FROM ROOF OF CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

simplest language, in words that a child could understand, and by means of illustrations drawn from the lowliest subjects. There was in the teaching no stilted ritual, no gorgeous ceremony, no foreshadowing of the princely prelate or the chanting priest. It was a religion associated with such sounds as the splash of a fisherman's net in the lake, the patter of sheep, the call of the shepherd, the tramp of the sower across the fields. As for the Teacher Himself, He was a man of the people, the son of a carpenter, Who knew no dwelling but the humblest, and Who, if He could be seen walking now along the road that stretches away towards Bethany, would be clad in no better garb than that of the fellah of to-day. If one were, on the other hand, to seek the teacher of the present time there would appear upon the road a bishop, resplendent in vestments of great price, who lorded it in a palace and who would carry, as a symbol of his office, the pastoral staff. This staff, a costly article of silver gilded with gold and rich with ornament, is a vulgar mockery of the simple iron crook of the Good Shepherd. The difference between the two well represents the gulf that separates the Christian faith as it was first taught from the Christian Church with its masquerade of mitres and vestments, and its tawdry machinery of worship. The one religion has become broken up into a hundred warring sects who regard one another with great malignancy and who have given rise to those 'contentions and jealousies which, from the earliest time to the present day, have been the bane of the history of the Christian Church.' Baedeker, in referring to the native Christians of Jerusalem, states that 'the bitter war which rages

among them is carried on with very foul weapons, and the contempt with which the orthodox Jews and Mohammedans look down on the Christians is only too well deserved.'

It is an unanswerable testimony to the power and vitality of the Christian faith that it should not only have survived but should have spread itself over the entire earth in spite of the slough of corruption through which the ministers of the Gospel have dragged it. Speaking of the morality and pursuits of the disciples of Christ in this very Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Dean Stanley writes as follows :¹ ' It would be an easy though melancholy task to tell how the Armenians stole the Angel's Stone from the ante-chapel of the Sepulchre—how the Latins procured a firman to stop the repairs of the dome by the Greeks—how the Greeks demolished the tombs of the Latin Kings, Godfrey and Baldwin, in the resting-place which those two heroic chiefs had chosen for themselves at the foot of Calvary—how, in the bloody conflicts of Easter, the English traveller was taunted by the Latin monks with eating the bread of their convent, and not fighting for them in the Church—how the Abyssinian convent was left vacant for the Greeks in the panic raised when a drunken Abyssinian monk shot the muezzin going his rounds on the top of Omar's minaret—how, after the great fire of 1808, which fire itself the Latins charge to the ambition of the Greek monks, two years of time and two-thirds of the cost of the restoration were consumed in the endeavours of each party, by bribes and litigations, to overrule and eject the others from the

¹ *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 458. (London, 1881.)

places they had respectively occupied in the ancient arrangement of the Churches.' When one finds the followers of the Redeemer practising such crimes as theft and sacrilege, murder and drunkenness, arson and church fighting, corruption and treachery, upon the very spot that they themselves claim to be the scene of the Crucifixion, and yet at the same time finds the faith gaining power in the world, it seems to be assured that Christianity will outlast both the Christian Church and the self-glorifying inventions of her priests.

X

THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT MORIAH

WITHOUT doubt the most beautiful building in Jerusalem is the Mohammedan shrine known as the Dome of the Rock. More than that, it may claim to be one of the most exquisite buildings in the world. It is sometimes called the Mosque of Omar, but to this title there are two objections: in the first place it was not built by Omar, and, secondly, it is not a mosque. The structure stands on or about the sites of Solomon's Temple and of that other temple, built by Herod, in which men worshipped at the time of Christ. Of these two temples no traces now exist unless they be in the form of certain deeply buried foundations which were laid to maintain level surfaces upon the summit of an uneven hill. This hill is Mount Moriah, the northern height of that slope which is now called Ophel and which is assumed to represent the hill of Zion, upon which stood the City of David (page 43). The rock concerned in the title 'The Dome of the Rock' is an exposed pinnacle of Mount Moriah which rises up, bare and undisturbed, in the centre of the shrine. The building itself seems to have been erected in the year A.D. 691, and to have been improved and enlarged in

A.D. 831. It can claim, therefore, to have lived through a period of one thousand two hundred years.

Before visiting the Dome it is necessary to obtain, through the visitor's Consul, the permission of the Turkish authorities to enter the place. The visitor also must be accompanied by a Turkish soldier in order that he may be protected from violence. This precaution sounds perilous, but it is merely a graceful, if complex, procedure for the acquiring of baksheesh. The Turkish guard who escorted us, and upon whom the safety of our lives theoretically depended, was an amiable but weary-looking man whose head and face were wrapped up in a woman's plaid shawl which magnified the size of the cranium immensely. Out of the folds of the shawl, which concealed all but his eyes, he muttered reassuringly from time to time. Possibly he implored us not to be anxious. He was armed with a sword of great size, while under his disengaged arm he carried an umbrella. In general aspect he was an ingenious compromise between an Eastern warrior and a countryman returning from the dentist. Happily he had no occasion to draw his scimitar 'to carve the casques of men,' but we found his umbrella a protection, for the day was wet.

The approach to the Dome is across the Tyropœon Valley by the way of the cotton merchants' bazaar. This is a long, empty, stinking tunnel, with a roof of solid masonry and, on either side, immense cavernous vaults built also of stone. The cotton merchants have vanished; the place is deserted; while the massive crypts where the cotton was piled are now used for storing manure. As an illustration of Turkish views

upon sanitation the place is not uninstructive. Sir Rider Haggard describes this awful passage as 'a covered-in ally of a filthiness so peculiar and surpassing that before it everything else of the kind which I have seen in the Holy Land sink its ineffectual stench.'

After escaping from the poisonous gloom of the cotton merchants' bazaar one comes suddenly upon a great level square, paved with clean white stones, dazzling as a plain of snow. The square is open to the heavens and to all that wide country which stretches to the east from the Mount of Olives to the far-away mountains of Moab. On the platform stands the shrine, isolated and alone, a wonder of yellow and blue-green walls, capped by a dome the colour of old bronze. The immense area is empty ; there is not a living creature to be seen. The only thing that moves upon it is the shadow of a cloud creeping across the broad expanse. The silence of the spot is absolute. After the noise of the bazaar the stillness makes one dumb. After the mean and narrow lanes the smooth, open platform seems to be vast and majestic as the sea. After the restless crowds which fill the city this place becomes at once an awe-inspiring solitude. After the fetid atmosphere of the town the rush of keen air that sweeps across this spotless terrace is as a cleansing stream.

It is impossible not to compare this solemn and silent court with the cramped yard around the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where is ever a rabble of beggars and a mob of pedlars selling crosses and postcards. The Mohammedan, it will be seen, holds that a proper reverence should mark the precincts of his holy places.

On this platform of stone stood that marvellous Temple built by Solomon. It was built amidst just such a silence as even now broods over the spot, for ‘the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.’

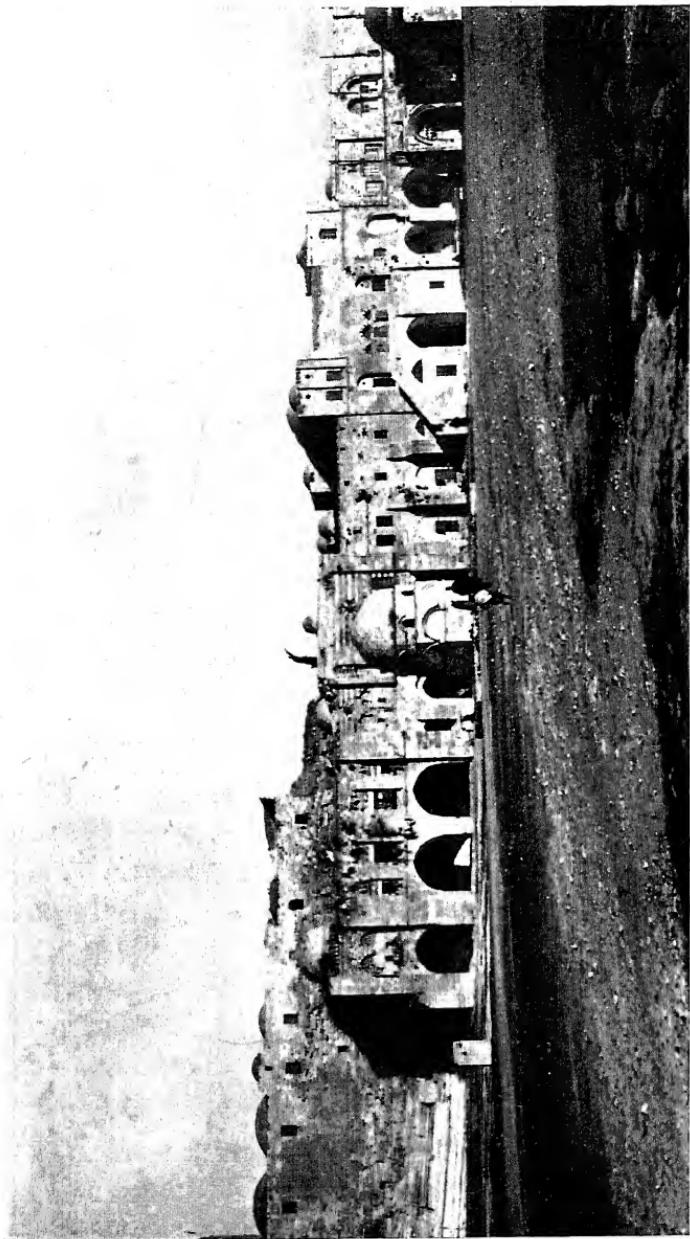
This great house, which was commenced in the month Zif, had ‘windows of narrow lights,’ and the length of it was threescore cubits. ‘The cedar of the house within was carved with knobs and open flowers,’ while the beams and walls were overlaid with the gold of Parvaim. It was here, too, that were placed the two cherubims of image work whose wings spread themselves forth twenty cubits. It was here also that stood the molten sea which was round in compass and ten cubits from brim to brim, while the edge of it was ‘like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies.’ It was a building dazzling from floor to ceiling with gold, for not only was it lined with gold, but ‘all the vessels that pertained unto the house’—the candlesticks, the tongs, the bowls, the snuffers, the basins, and the spoons—were made by Solomon of pure gold. The lamps, too, ‘made he of gold, and that perfect gold.’ It was from the open terrace also that the column of smoke from the great altar rose upwards into the air. On a still day it would stand like a grey column against the background of the far hills and the blue sky.

On that side of the Temple area which abuts upon Jerusalem there stands, at a respectful distance, a range of irregular buildings fashioned of stone. They have

dark archways, patched and seamed walls with furtive windows, and are generally suggestive of grave mystery. They are not apparently dwelling-houses, nor are they public buildings. They seem designed rather to make the background for some drama full of dread deeds and sinister intents. I avoided making any inquiry about them, for their fascination is bound up in their inscrutability, and the charm would vanish if one were told that they were merely discarded barracks or abandoned warehouses.

The Dome of the Rock is an octagonal building most wonderful in its colouring. The lower walls are of fine marble of the tint of old ivory. Above them comes a row of pointed windows filled with stained glass. The walls between the windows are covered with many-coloured Persian tiles, the general effect of which is to produce a tremulous shimmer of blue and green like that on a beetle's back. Above the windows are texts from the Koran in the form of a bright band of white kufic letters in a setting of deep blue. Over the octagon is the dome, which is of that violet-grey colour to be seen on a long-buried bronze sword. So between the platform of white and the sky of lapis lazuli stands this exquisite fabric which, as it leaves the ground, changes from faint yellow to an iridescent blue, shot with green, and then, in the dome, to a grey deepened with blue. The whole structure suggests a rare casket of ivory and porcelain, fragile and tender, placed alone in the centre of a plateau of stone.

Within the building all is dark. Until one becomes accustomed to the gloom there is merely an impression



HOUSES IN THE TEMPLE AREA, JERUSALEM

of a great round chamber with a luminous dome high up in the air and on the ground a grille of gilded metal surrounding an inner circle of purple pillars capped with gold. The floor is covered with red Persian carpets and yellow mats. Not a sound of a footstep can be heard. No one speaks, or speaks only in a whisper, while, moving about in the shadows, are men in long brown robes with turbans on their heads. This is a holy reverential place, the shrine of a grave religion, a place of unfathomable calm. It is in great contrast with the bazaar-like Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is holy only in name.

A gate leads through the grille to the area beneath the Dome. This grille is a beautiful screen of wrought iron made by the French about the end of the twelfth century. There is a passage within the iron screen, limited, on its inner side, by a circular wooden paling curiously panelled and painted in faint colours. Within the paling is the bare rock which the shrine protects.

The interior of the Dome is supremely beautiful, while the softened light that fills it is so magical in colour that it is, I think, unlike any light that ever illumined nave or aisle. The upper part of the Dome is a blaze of red and gold blended in an intricate, quivering pattern. Then comes a row of windows filled with stained glass. The colours which are splashed on the irregular panes are mostly green and yellow, blue and red, and the effect produced is only comparable to that which would be presented by a rich Persian carpet if it had been rendered translucent and then held up against the light. The lower part of the Dome is lined with what might be

elaborate and faded needlework in which some threads are grey, some gold, and some green. The surface glistens with a thousand bright spots and is broken horizontally by two narrow bands of red and gold. Between the outer pillars of the shrine stretch iron rods from which are suspended tiny lamps of clear glass and of the very simplest pattern. They are arranged always, so far as I observed, in little clusters of five or of seven, and make, I should imagine, the most appropriate illumination that any place of worship could provide.

Within the wooden paling and under the centre of the Dome is the Holy Rock. It is a mass of bare natural stone, rugged and uncouth, of a warm yellow colour faintly flushed with red. It rises to the height of some five feet and is stated to measure fifty-eight feet in one direction and forty-four feet in the other. It is the actual summit of Mount Moriah, a spur of rock standing now just as it stood, open to the sun and the rain, in the days when Solomon was King. It is true that the Crusaders covered it for a time with marble and placed an altar upon it, but of this barbaric treatment scarcely a scar remains. A pinnacle of rock that has remained unchanged since it met the sight of the first Jebusite adventurers who ever penetrated to this solitude is surely more worshipful than a new altar fresh from the workshops of Italy or France. There are many who hold to the belief that upon this very shoulder of rock there stood the Altar of Burnt Offering. Be that as it may, it will suffice for most that they can see here at least one unsullied piece of holy ground. They can see, moreover, in this place

of quietude and peace an expression of the most intense devotion. In their oblation to their God the shrine-builders have given of their best, have given their all, the labour of years, the invention of minds striving to ascribe the fittest glory to Heaven, the imagination of brains seeking to embody the ecstasy of worship.

There are many legends connected with the Dome of the Rock, some of which are curiously fantastic. For example, there is near the north door of the shrine a slab of jasper let into the ground. From the surface of the slab three or four bright-headed nails project. It is impossible to suppose that the imaginative Eastern mind could leave this nail-studded piece of jasper without a story. So the story is as follows. The slab once decorated the lid of Solomon's tomb, and into it Mohammed drove nineteen golden nails. Why Mohammed undertook this curious piece of work, and why the nails were exactly nineteen in number is not known. It was found by some observant person that a nail fell out at the end of certain periods of time and it was concluded that when the last fell away the world would come to an end. One day the Devil, who had discovered the secret of the nails, came slyly to the spot and began to pull out the nails as fast as he could. In this most nefarious and heartless work he was 'fortunately discovered by the Angel Gabriel,' who at once made him leave off and drove him away. But for this happy intervention of the angel the world might have come to an end long ago. In any case the life of the globe has been much shortened by this wanton mischief, for there are only three and a half nails left. It is very much to be hoped

that no careless tourist will knock out the few that remain with his heel as he stumbles about in the dark.

Then, again, not very far away from the Dome of the Rock is a well or cistern called the Leaf Fountain. It acquired this pretty name under the following circumstances. Once upon a time a careless man, who was a friend of the Caliph Omar, let his pitcher fall into this well when he came to draw water. He naturally at once climbed down the well for the purpose of recovering the pitcher. Now any little girl who is versed in fairy stories needs not to be told that when he reached the bottom of the well he discovered a very curious-looking door. He naturally opened the door and, passing through the entry, found himself, according to precedent, in an enchanting garden with many orchards in it. When he came to explore this wonderful spot he found it more marvellous than he could have imagined any place to be.

Feeling that his friends in Jerusalem would never believe his bare story, he picked a leaf off one of the trees and tucked it behind his ear. He put the leaf there in order that he might have both hands free to climb up the side of the well again. Having, no doubt, taken care to close the door at the bottom after him, he reached the top of the well without difficulty. The story does not relate if he got his pitcher back or not. The most extraordinary thing happened to the leaf. The man, of course, kept it, but to his surprise not only did it never fade, but it ever preserved its delicious green colour with all its original freshness and softness.



THE DOME OF THE ROCK

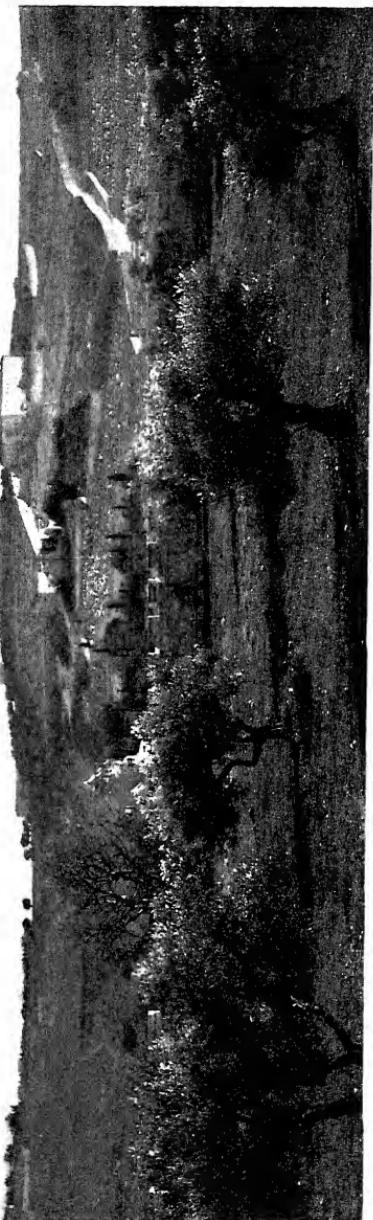
It therefore became evident in time that the garden he had strolled into when he was looking for his pitcher was no less than the Garden of Paradise. I am afraid that the door at the bottom of the well will never be found by anyone else, so it is not worth any boy's while to drop a pitcher down for the sake of making the search. The reason is this. In old days the water came to the well all the way from Bethlehem through a subterranean conduit. This is very mysterious and very appropriate ; but the people of Bethlehem began to meddle with this water supply, so in order to obtain a 'constant service' for the Leaf Fountain what is called 'a four-inch iron pipe' was laid down in the year of our Lord 1901. Now it may be safe to conclude that a four-inch iron pipe direct from Birmingham does not run outside any door that leads into Paradise.

There are very many things of interest about the Temple area besides the legends and the stories. Among such is the Mosque El-Aksa, which was, at the beginning of its days, a sixth-century church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It was converted into a mosque by the enthusiastic Omar. This church turned mosque is a curiously hybrid structure which, although it has been subjected to an infinite number of 'restorations' and rebuildings, still presents traces of its original magnificence. It is a kind of architectural olla podrida, and among the medley of stones that make it up many very beautiful features may still be discovered. Incidentally attention is drawn to a spot near the main entrance where the murderers of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, lie buried.

There are some extraordinary crypts and substructures beneath the Temple area. The most astonishing is a subterranean passage where is a flight of steps divided down the middle by massive piers of great antiquity. It is suggested that this passage is a relic of the magnificent stair which led up the slope of Mount Moriah from that gate of the city which, in Solomon's days, was by the pool of Siloam. It was this stair which Solomon pointed out to the Queen of Sheba as the 'ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord,' and when she had seen it and had noted also 'the meat of his table, . . . and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel' she was filled with such amazement that 'there was no more spirit in her.'

There are also those far-reaching subterranean passages, the vaulting of which is supported by titanic piers, which are known as Solomon's stables. Although Solomon knew them not, and although they were probably only used as stables by the Crusaders, it would appear that many of the great stones of the pillars are of extreme antiquity.

Finally, in that part of the city wall which encloses the Temple area on its eastern quarter is the Golden Gate. This gate is blocked up with masonry on the outer side and is beautiful only in its name. It is a square, unfriendly-looking mass of stone which might as well be called the Dumb Gate as the Golden. It is supposed by some that it was through this portal that Christ passed when He made His triumphal entry from Bethany. Those who are experts in the reading of



MOUNT OF OLIVES

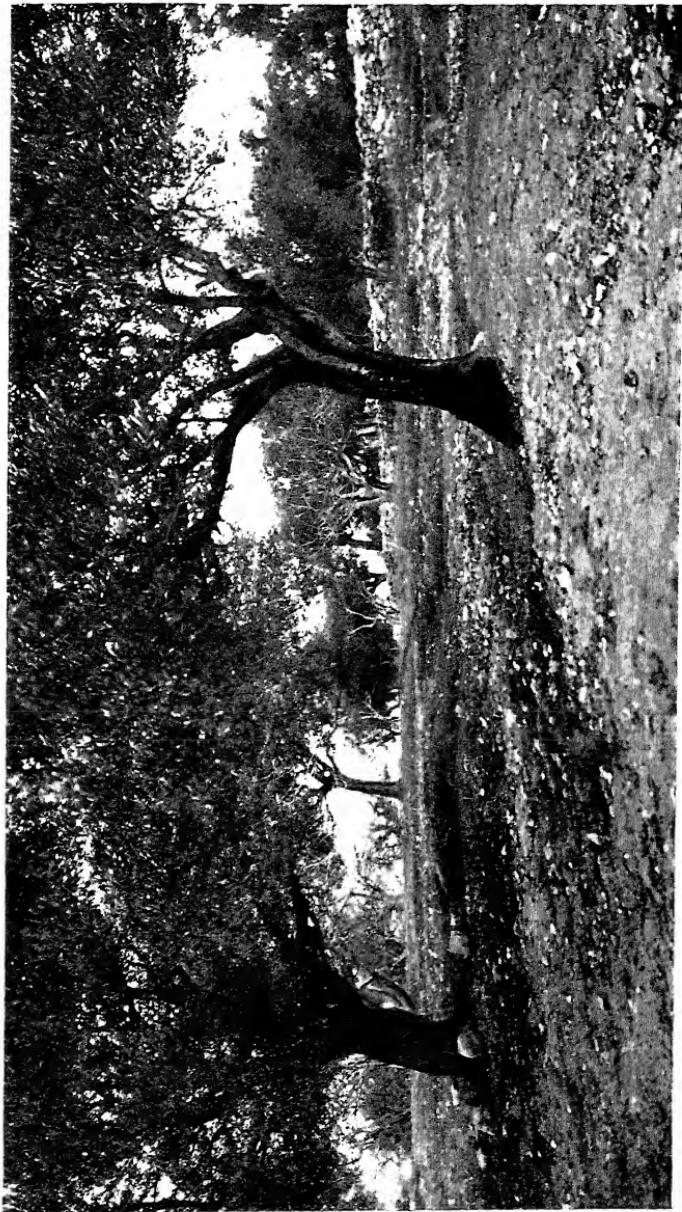
sermons in stones state that the present structure cannot be older than the sixth or seventh century after Christ, and that in its general character it is Byzantine. The gate is one of the many disappointing things in Jerusalem.

XI

OLIVET AND THE GARDEN

THE Mount of Olives, as has already been said, is a dispirited-looking slope, littered with stones, wrinkled with lines of limestone walls, and mocked by a number of recent buildings of defiant ugliness. Once only during our stay in Jerusalem did the poor mean place look beautiful. It was on a morning when we found the city and the whole country round about deep under snow. The sky was blue, the sun unclouded, and Olivet a hill of pure white from foot to summit. The landscape was marvellously softened. The country had lost its severity and had become even tender-looking. The snow had covered up the bareness of the hill, had cloaked its poverty, and had hidden the wretched crop of stones which filled its fields. Even the new buildings which dot the slope in ungainly blotches gave less evidence of their effrontery, while the deep green cypresses in the Garden of Gethsemane and the rose-yellow walls of the city, as they stood out against the snow, were very beautiful to see.

There are now but few olive trees growing on the hill, but these, where they have been left undisturbed,



MOUNT OF OLIVES

form thickets which, although scanty and starveling, yet preserve some memory of the charm which must have once belonged to the spot. Of the olive tree Ruskin says it is well 'to have loved it for Christ's sake.'¹ He describes 'the pointed fretwork of its light and narrow leaves, inlaid on the blue field of the sky : . . . and the softness of the mantle, silver grey, and tender like the down on a bird's breast, with which it veils the undulations of the mountains.' It is this distant effect of the tree, as of 'a rounded mass or ball of downy foliage,' which so tempers the crudeness of the hill and which hides so well its sour surface.

The view of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives is a view of great fascination. Before one stretches a compact city, a walled town, the confines of which are abruptly marked by the straight unbroken wall. Outside the wall is the open country, severely simple, and deserted save for a few wandering goats. Within is the complex crowd of roofs and steeples, of towers, domes, and minarets which make up the amazing city. The contrast is shrewdly made, for from the foot of the wall the ground, bare as a desert, slopes down to the empty valley of the Kedron, while upon the other side is a teeming town packed with habitations and with men. The general colour of the city is a soft yellowish grey, a tint so faint, indeed, that the place looks ghostly and unreal. Once in the day, and once only, just at the time when the sun has capped the crest of Olivet, the city is golden. The square-cut masonry of the Golden Gate makes the one break in the monotonous

line of wall, and if it was through this portal that Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem it is possible to picture the procession winding across the valley, as it would have appeared to the old people of Bethany who had followed as far as the top of the mount.

As may be supposed, there are many 'sacred sites' about this notable hill. At the foot of the mount is the tomb of the Virgin—where, the monks aver, she was buried by the apostles and where she lay until her assumption. Here also are the tombs of her parents. This spot is protected by a church of some antiquity, the greater part of which is below the level of the ground. The church and its contents impose a severe strain upon the credulous, for of the many relics displayed it is heartlessly affirmed 'not one is genuine.' On the hill-side is shown the exact spot where Christ wept over the city, a spot 'still undefiled and unhallowed by mosque or church, chapel, or tower.'¹ An uneasy-looking rock indicates the place where Peter, James, and John fell asleep during Christ's agony in the garden. Not far from it a fragment of a column marks the spot where Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

Near the summit of the hill is the Chapel of the Ascension, which covers the precise part of the earth last touched by the feet of Christ before He was carried into Heaven. More than that, in a marble enclosure is exhibited the impression of the right foot of Christ, turned southwards.

Of these and like holy sites Dean Stanley writes in this wise: 'These localities have, indeed, no real connection

¹ *Sinai and Palestine*, by Dean Stanley, p. 190. (London. 1881.)

with Him. . . . The desolation and degradation which have so often left on those who visit Jerusalem the impression of an accursed city, read in this sense a true lesson: "He is not here. He is risen."

At the foot of Olivet is the garden of gardens—the Garden of Gethsemane. There is no evidence that the Gethsemane of the time of Christ was a garden in the sense in which the term is now employed. The Franciscan monks who tend this little place have accepted the term in its present meaning and have produced a formal garden of the very latest type. The garden is a small square enclosure surrounded by high walls of recent construction, and is situated at a point where two roads meet. It is not happy in its placing, for just beyond it is a new and extravagant Russian church crowned with bulbous domes, heavily overlaid with gilt, and suggesting nothing so nearly as an entertainment kiosk at the end of a pier.

As to the genuineness of the site Professor Dalman, speaking of Christ's last hours in the garden, writes as follows: 'His intention clearly was to retire where He might be undisturbed by any, even by the traitor, until He should be ready. He would, therefore, seek for the most secluded spot. This could not be found to the south or east hard by important public roads, least of all where "Gethsemane" is now shown; but rather to the north, where no road followed the valley, or crossed over the mountain. Here only could there be a "garden."¹

At the present spot there is within the high wall

¹ *Temple Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 222. (London. 1910.)

a path which follows closely the sides of the square. To this path the visitor is restricted. The garden itself is in the centre of the enclosure. It is an ordinary little suburban garden, precisely of such a type as may be seen, a hundred times over, in Brixton or in Clapham, or around a signalman's box by a quiet railway station. It is laid out in little paths and beds full of marigolds and stocks and of plants in pots. At the end of the formal plot is a greenhouse—a greenhouse in Gethsemane! The garden is within an iron cage or fence such as one sees at a zoological collection. The object of the same is not to keep any creature in but to keep the pilgrim out. But for the iron rails and bars the pilgrims would strip the garden in a week and leave it barer than would a flight of locusts. Every tree that overhangs the path is protected by strong wire netting, so that even the most agile pilgrim could not, by leaping in the air, obtain so much as a leaf.

There are some beautiful cypresses in the place, and some eight very ancient olive trees. No tree in the world can look so old as an olive, and these few contorted and wrinkled veterans look older than any living thing I have ever come upon. They present a morbid realisation of the most extreme degree of senility that it is possible to imagine. They are so grey, so bent, so shrivelled, so sapless, that their deformed bodies and limbs, covered as they are by horrible outgrowths, might have been already dead a century. Apart from these infirm old trees the garden is a child's garden and is tended with more than a child's devotion and tenderness. The Franciscan monks who keep the garden as it is are



CORNER OF THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE



WALLS OF JERUSALEM NEAR THE JAFFA GATE, SHOWING THE DITCH

so evidently sincere in their care of it, and so happy in the conviction that it is what Gethsemane should be, that one cannot but hope that the learned may be wrong and that this small quaint retreat marks the spot 'over the brook Cedron, where was a garden,' where Christ was 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,' and where He begged of His disciples 'tarry ye here, and watch with me.'

There is one thing growing in the garden, under the old olive trees, that fits it well. It is a bush of rosemary. So here 'there's rosemary, that's for remembrance: pray you, love, remember.'

XII

TOMBS AND POOLS

ONE of the most pleasant and picturesque walks in Jerusalem is round the city, within the walls, especially on the southern side of the town. This kind of desultory ramble, however, is not encouraged by any self-respecting dragoman, for the strict ritual of a visit to Jerusalem enforces—after the churches have been ‘done’—an inspection of certain tombs and pools. These are not pleasant places, and the viewing of the same in many instances suggests such a visit as a sanitary inspector would be called upon to pay.

In the Gospel according to St. John it is written : ‘ Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.’ This account suggests a wide sheet of limpid water surrounded by a cloister of some magnitude, for it will be noted that the multitude who came to the pool was ‘great.’ The pool of to-day is far down in the earth at the bottom of a pit delved out of a deposit of vague ruins. At the summit of the excavation, in



JERUSALEM: FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, SHOWING THE GOLDEN GATE AND DOME OF THE ROCK

place of a sheep market, is a modern laundry with a corrugated iron roof, and around it a quite extraordinary number of stockings hanging out to dry. A stone stair, very steep and narrow, leads down the side of the pit and finally ends before a small cistern or reservoir cut out of the rock and arched over by ancient vaulting. In the cistern, which could not accommodate a larger multitude than five or six, is water which would probably be condemned by any medical officer of health. This is the pool of Bethesda.

Among the debris through which the shaft leading to the 'Pool' has pierced are the ruins of two churches. The present church which stands upon the spot is the ancient and interesting Church of St. Anne. It is dedicated to the mother of the Virgin Mary, who is stated to have lived in a cave which is still shown to believers. In this cave the Virgin Mary was born. It is very noteworthy that many of the sacred sites in the Holy Land are in or about caves, and, were these sites genuine, one could only conclude that the humbler folk at the time of Christ were all cave-dwellers.

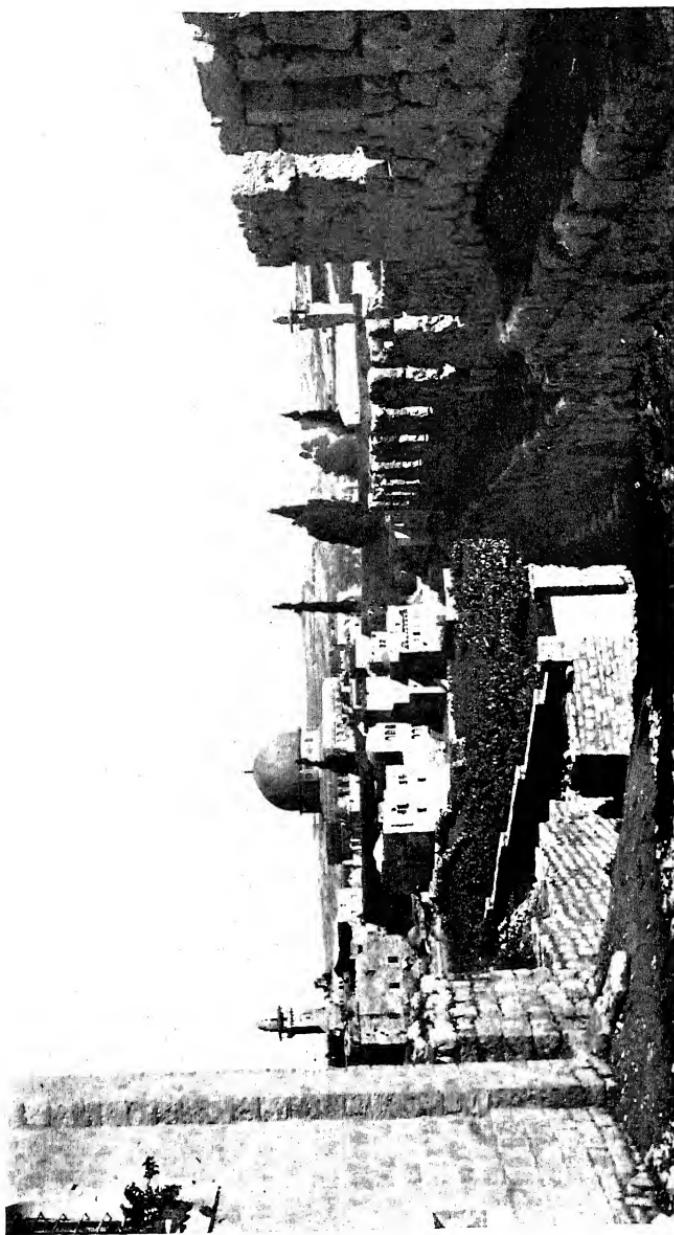
The Pool of Siloam is described by Sir Rider Haggard as 'an evil-smelling mud hole.' It is a wretched spot, among the disordered ruins of which have been discovered miscellaneous fragments of a bath house, a basilica, a flight of steps, and a paved street. Out of these fragments it may be possible for the imaginative to reconstruct the Pool where the blind man 'went and washed,' and even to conceive that it was along this paved street that he felt his way, tapping with a stick. The village of Siloam is, I think, the most

abject hamlet I can call to mind. It is made up of more or less ruinous, earth-coloured houses and hovels clinging to an uncharitable slope. At a distance it is not easy to tell the dwellings from the rocks, while certain of the ancient tombs of the place are turned into habitations for the living. It is appropriate that the Leper Hospital should have been established on the outskirts of this inhuman-looking abode of men.

If rich in nothing else Jerusalem is at least rich in tombs. Prominent among these is the Tomb of David. This term is applied to a picturesque collection of ancient Mohammedan buildings. The tomb is not visible to the eye, but the visitor is assured that it exists somewhere in the underground mysteries of the place. An opportunity of verifying this assurance is not given. On the first floor of the premises is the upper chamber, or Cænaculum, in which it is said that the Last Supper was held. The fee for admission is from one to two francs. The upper chamber is a portion of a medieval church, divided in the middle by a couple of columns. The ceiling is vaulted and the whole work is ascribed to the fourteenth century. The stone on which the disciples sat when the Lord washed their feet is on exhibition.

Fancy has been very exuberant and very detailed in this quarter of Jerusalem, for near by are the house of Caiaphas, the spot where Peter was standing when he denied Christ, and the exact place where the cock crew.

Among the other tombs which the tourist is expected to visit are the Tombs of the Kings, the Tombs of the Judges, and the Tombs of the Prophets. These are all



VIEW FROM INSIDE THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM, SHOWING THE DOME OF THE ROCK

rock tombs of some antiquity. The names they bear are purely fanciful, for they have never afforded a resting-place to a king of Judah, to a judge of Israel, or to any one of the many prophets, greater or less. The most interesting of these are the Tombs of the Kings, an extensive series of rock-hewn catacombs which are believed to be the burying-places of Queen Helena of Adiabene and her family. The tombs are approached by a wide staircase cut in the rock, where can be seen the channels for conducting water to the cisterns below. The cisterns are in perfect preservation and serve to show with what ceremonial the burial of the dead was carried out in the first century. The actual tombs are entered through an elaborately carved portal, and as there are receptacles for over seventy bodies the underground chambers are far extending. There are both rock shelves for bodies and shaft tombs. By far the most attractive feature of this burying-place is afforded by the fact that one entrance of the tomb is closed by a large round stone which is still in place, in a sloping groove cut out of the rock. It serves to make very clear the expression 'And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.'

A most conspicuous tomb stands in the valley of the Kedron. It is called the Tomb of Absalom. It is a strange-looking monument composed of a square building decorated by pillars with Ionic capitals supporting a Doric architrave. Above this rises a curious pagoda-like steeple of stone, the summit of which would seem to be carved to imitate an opening flower. The monument is ascribed to the Maccabæan period. Who lies buried in this place is unknown, for the curious

structure does certainly not mark the resting-place of the adventurous Absalom, nor can it be that pathetic memorial he erected for himself. The story of Absalom's burying and of his monument is told in the Bible in the following words: 'And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent. Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.' Unfortunately for the hope to be never forgotten it cannot be that the time-battered cenotaph the tourist is dragged to stare at is any relic of Absalom's Place in the King's Dale.



THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS, JERUSALEM

XIII

THE MOANING BY THE WALL

THE most living thing in Jerusalem is the spectacle provided at the Jew's Wailing-place, just outside the Temple area, on certain days of the week. It is a spectacle, dramatic and affecting. It expresses in one slight but vivid tableau a calamitous episode in the history of the city. It serves to keep in remembrance the great sorrow of a nation. It signifies the aspiration of a people—if not materially, at least by sentiment and symbol.

The Hebrews who possessed themselves of the eastern corner of the Mediterranean were a brave, determined, and adventurous people. In their impetuous advance they carried everything before them. They established themselves in the city of Jerusalem and there built on the height their great Temple. This Temple held all that was most sacred in the religion of Israel. It was the heart of the nation, the depository of its hopes and its ambitions, the one rallying point of clansmen who were losing other ties of brotherhood.

Then came the onslaught of a stronger power ; the grip upon the height was loosened ; the people wavered

and fell back from the walls, so that in a while all was lost. The Temple was destroyed ; the sacred things were scattered to the winds, and the people were driven away like raided cattle. They still, however, remained a people. They were still bound together by a common faith and common traditions. They still held the spot where the Temple had stood to be the one most holy on earth. Thus it is that for centuries past pious Jews have gathered without the wall of their desecrated sanctuary, and have there bewailed the downfall of Jerusalem, and have there prayed for the restoration of their once great kingdom.

The lamentable litany is ever the same. The weary chant has never changed. Still without the Temple wall the cry goes up :

‘ For the palace that lies desolate :
For the walls that are overthrown :
For our great men who lie dead.’

The prayer is poured forth to the Redeemer of Zion to gather again the children of Jerusalem, so that the kingdom may return to the Holy Hill and comfort may come upon those who mourn over the city. This is the dirge of the Wailing-place, the outcasts’ lamentation, the moaning of the wall. It is to be heard to this very day, and yet eighteen hundred years have passed since the Temple was finally destroyed. Was there ever such a grief as this ! Was ever a wrong so long remembered : has ever a hope so long survived !

The Wailing-place is reached by many devious ways : by stairs slimy with dirt, by vaulted passages, by rambling and unclean lanes. At the end, a narrow

paved alley is come upon, on the east side of which is a colossal wall sixty feet high. This is one of the outer sustaining walls of the Temple area, and is as near to the site of the ancient Temple as the Jew allows himself to go. It is a wall like a cliff, sheer and immense. It is as the bastion of an unassailable fortress. The lower courses are made up of gigantic blocks of ancient stone which were laid down, the learned say, in the days of Herod. They are stones, brown by reason of great age, in the crannies of which many a green shrub and many an adventurous weed are growing.

At the foot of the appalling wall a number of Jews, both men and women, are huddled. They mutter melancholy sentences from greasy books ; they pray ; they weep ; they kiss the wall ; they touch the wall with their hands as if there were comfort in the feel of it ; they rest their heads against it as a watcher leans against a closed door. Most of them are old, while all seem poor. They look dejected, tired, and despairing. There is one very ancient ragged Jew in the crowd who is the embodiment of hopelessness. His face is white and lined, his eyes seem sightless. He wears a flapping felt hat, beneath which straggle two thready side-locks. He is clad in a long black coat and vague leg-endings. His lamentation has degenerated into a mere peevish whine. He neither protests nor petitions. He merely moans as would one who had beaten upon a shut portal for fifty years. Near him is a younger man, a Spanish Jew well clad, tall, and upright, with a face of great refinement—the face of a visionary. He speaks his litany with insistence and assurance, and prays as one

who knows that his prayer at least is heard. It is he, and such as he, who keep alive the spark of hope among the grey and scattered ashes.

It is an extraordinary and impressive picture. This remnant of a once mighty and arrogant people clamouring outside the wall of their lost Temple ; this persistent prayer droned out for wellnigh two thousand years : the wall so terrific, so impassive, so impossible, while those who beat upon it, seeking to come in, are so feeble and so forlorn. As well might one conceive the picture of a solitary man kneeling at the foot of a mountain praying that it may be moved ! What an astounding realisation it offers of a faith that would make a precipice to crumble, of a hope that would cleave a barrier of stone, of a longing that can survive the denial of centuries !

The passer-by may ask, in the words of the Book of Nehemiah, 'What do these feeble Jews ? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish ?' And the answer is that among the heaps of rubbish, among the piled-up ruins of long ages, among the wreckage left by war, earthquake, and fire there are some who can still see the glow of light on the stones that marks the spot where the Ark of the Lord had stood.

The grandeur and pathos of the scene are enhanced rather than diminished by the crowd of tourists who gather here each Friday afternoon, who giggle and chaff and punctuate the solemn litany by the clicking of their kodaks.

XIV

BETHLEHEM

SOME five and a half miles south of Jerusalem stands the town of Bethlehem, the first halting-place on the long trail that leads into the land of Egypt. There is between Jerusalem and Bethlehem a road which those who are reckless in the use of terms call a carriage road and pronounce to be good. It is in strict fact, a slouching and unsteady road, raw and rough, which is indicated by a haze of hot dust in the summer and by a tract of furrowed mud in the rains. Imagination has endowed this way with picturesqueness. Is it not a path of consummate peace, wending through 'a land which the Lord thy God careth for,' across green hills and by sheltering valleys drowsy with the babble of streams? In reality it traverses a poor, bare, and colourless country, unfriendly and unlovable, where the painfully cultivated fields are littered with stones, where rough walls take the place of hedges, and where the land is treeless but for a few mendicant olives. Indeed, a chilled upland in Derbyshire, where stone walls and a thorn bush may be the only features in the landscape, is to be preferred to the country towards Bethlehem.

It is hard to find in the Holy Land any of that charm of scenery which certain writers will persist in bestowing upon it. 'Those who describe Palestine as beautiful,' says one who knew the country well, 'must have either a very inaccurate notion of what constitutes beauty of scenery, or must have viewed the country through a highly-coloured medium.'

Some four miles along the road, and by the border of it, is the Tomb of Rachel. This is a modern Moslem sanctuary made of white washed plaster freckled with the scribblings of devout pilgrims. It is a crude building, a mere rustic's memorial. Apparently from early Christian days tradition has associated this spot with the burial-place of the chosen wife of Jacob. It will be remembered that Rachel, 'the beautiful and well favoured,' died by the roadside after she had given birth to her second son, and that 'as her soul was in departing' she called his name Benoni, but his father called him Benjamin. Jacob's account of her dying is pathetically simple. He says: 'And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way when yet there was but a little way to come into Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.' And now the pillar which Jacob set up upon her grave is replaced by this poor besmirched mausoleum, and, sadder still, men learned in the Holy writings decline to accept the site as authentic, affirming that 'no identification is at present possible.'¹

Still nearer to the town is David's Well, represented at the present moment by three rock-hewn cisterns filled

¹ *The Temple Dictionary of the Bible.* (London. 1910.)

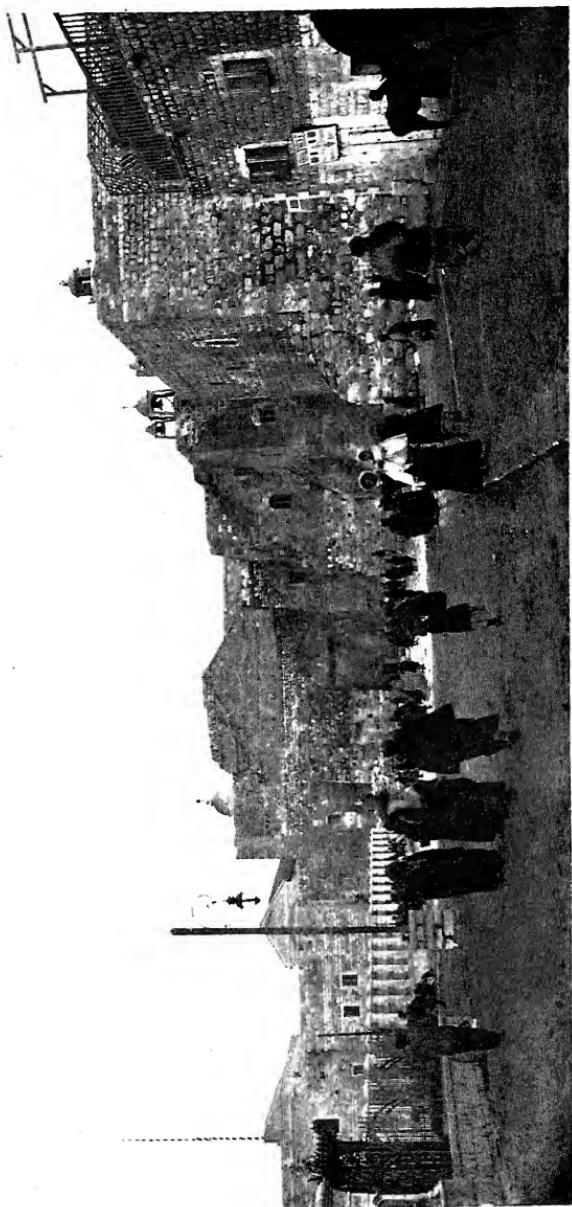
with fetid water, which same is described in the guide-books as being 'highly dangerous.' There is every reason to suppose that these tanks occupy the site of the 'well' which was beloved by David. David, when roving the country at the head of a band of freebooters, found himself, on a certain occasion, very hard pressed. The weather was hot—for it was the harvest-time—and things were going ill. The chronicler writes: 'And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which is by the gate!' To him, as a boy, the spring would be very familiar, for he was the son of a well-to-do farmer in the town and must have stopped at the well many a time when coming back to Bethlehem with his sheep. Unfortunately, on the occasion of David's utterance, Bethlehem was held by the Philistines, but three of the band—hardy ruffians no doubt—overheard their chief's cry and at once quietly determined to give him what he longed for.

It was a dangerous, if not a desperate, venture; but the three took the hazard. They cut their way through the enemy's lines; they reached the well, and they brought a pitcher of water back in triumph to the camp. One can imagine with what pride they would place it before their captain—water from the familiar spring which was by the gate. A bloody raid it may have been, and all of the three may have been stiff with wounds, but they had got the pitcher with hardly a drop from it spilt. David's action when he took the pitcher and when he looked into the eyes of the three gallant lads, who had cheerfully risked their lives to give him one moment's

pleasure, must have brought a lump into the throats of all who stood by. He would not drink the water, much as he longed for it, but emptied the pitcher on to the ground and, with dry lips, said that since the draught had been obtained at the jeopardy of three loyal lives, to drink it would be to drink the blood of his bravest friends. Is there any nobler picture than this of the spirit of comradeship among men ?

Round about Bethlehem the country is broken up into a number of low hills of bleak limestone, on the ridge of one of which the town is placed. It, therefore, stands high so that it can be seen from afar off. It is a modern town unredeemably ugly and built of stone dug from the gaunt flanks of the hill it crowns. The slopes of this ridge are hacked into a multitude of step-like terraces for vines, supported by interminable dull walls. It is a drab city of drab houses on a drab ridge, as monotonous in colour and as cheerless looking as a pile of dry bones. No doubt when the flowers are in bloom and when the leaves are on the vines the place is less ashen, but it would need a garden of the Hesperides to make this city of dry bones live. Such is Bethlehem, the dreary town with its foreground of stones and its background of limestone hills. Viewing the place from a distance one cannot suppose that there are any children in it or that its cold-blooded walls can ever re-echo to the laughter of women or the singing of men.

The one thing of interest in the town is the birth-place of Christ. The Church of the Nativity is of great size, and there is little reason to doubt that it covers the spot where stood, according to the traditions of the



BETHLEHEM : THE CHURCH OF NATIVITY
(Note small entrance door in centre of picture)

time, the famous village inn. The actual place in which it is claimed that Christ was born is a cave—a quite impossible cave. As has already been said (p. 109) many of the sacred places in Palestine are located in caves. The devout are asked to believe that the mother of the Virgin Mary lived in a cave, that the Virgin herself was born in a cave, that the Annunciation took place in a cave, and that the angels appeared to the shepherds in a cave. The reason of this predilection for caves is not far to seek. The dwelling-house in the East—especially the dwelling-house of the poor—is and ever has been a fragile and transitory structure. It is not to be supposed that in olden times it was less unstable than the crumbling fabric which makes up the house of the village of to-day. Indeed, a writer in the 'Temple Dictionary' says: 'In the time of our Lord the external appearance of the houses of the middle and lower classes must have been much what it is at present.' It was only by constant propping up of ceilings and daubing of walls that the house was prevented from falling into decay. The flat roof, as soon as it became cracked in the heat, was ready to let through the rains of the winter, and when the walls of rubble and earth became waterlogged the days of the house were numbered. Within a few years the neglected home would become a heap of ruins. Now it was not until some three hundred years after the death of Christ that any serious attempt was made to discover the sites that were associated with the events of His life. Long before the lapse of that time the deserted village would have become a vague heap

of amorphous earth, the Carpenter's cottage at Nazareth would have crumbled into dust, and the village inn at Bethlehem, with its stables and its mangers, after three centuries of wind and rain, of moth and rust, of thieves that break in and of marauders that search for fuel, would have vanished as completely as if it had never been. If there chanced to be a cave in or near the obliterated town it would be, and would remain, the one ancient object in the place, the subject of the old men's gossip and of the young men's invention ; and if it should happen that some religious recluse had established his home in the cavern it may be assumed that he would not fail to make it fit some detail of the great drama that was ever in his mind. Thus, as says Dean Stanley, 'the moment that the religion of Palestine fell into the hands of Europeans, it is hardly too much to say, that, as far as sacred traditions are concerned, it became a religion of caves.'

The Church of the Nativity is a great basilica erected by the Emperor Constantine in A.D. 330. It seems to have been extensively remodelled some two hundred years later and has been, like other churches, the subject of many destructive 'restorations.' Still, there remains a building of such extreme antiquity that it can claim to be 'in all probability the most ancient monument of Christian architecture in the world.'¹ No church looks less like a church externally than does this basilica of the Nativity. Indeed, the unguided, if wandering through Bethlehem in search of the church, might pass the building many a time without a suspicion that it was

¹ Stanley, *loc. cit.*

the place they sought. Around a paved square that might be a parade-ground is a heavy mass of buildings made up of frowning walls, high up on the face of which are a few narrow windows heavily barred. One looks in vain for a spire or a dome, for a porch or a cloister, for a window which would be fitting to a chancel or an aisle. On the parapet of the wall is a bell, but it looks like an alarm-bell. The place indeed would inevitably be mistaken for either a fortress or a prison.

In one angle of this mass of masonry there is, on the level of the ground, a hole in the wall, an entry so small and low that one has to stoop to pass through it. This is the door of the church, although it has all the appearance of the sally-port in a stronghold. The reason of the narrow door is fear of the Moslems ; while the reason for the church that is outwardly a citadel is the fact that, year after year, it has waited breathlessly for attacks from the hosts of the unbeliever. It has not waited in vain, but, by virtue of the high wall and the narrow door, it has held its own. It must be some two hundred years ago since the Turks stripped the lead off the roof to make the same into bullets. It was a nefarious act, for the lead in question had been given by King Edward IV of England for the repairing of the church, at which time Philip of Burgundy provided the pine wood for the like good object.

Within the walls and behind the narrow door there has been much fighting among the representatives of the Church of Christ : the result, at the moment, being a sullen truce which leaves the building in the

joint occupation of the Greeks, the Latins, and the Armenians. As at any moment the ministers of God may be seized with a passion to murder their brethren in the faith, a Turkish soldier, fully armed, stands on duty in the little chapel which professes to be the actual place where Christ was born. This is a picture to contemplate—a Mohammedan soldier keeping watch over the spot where the shepherds found 'the babe lying in a manger.'

The basilica is an immense square chamber, bare as an empty ballroom. It consists of a nave separated from two aisles by a double row of pillars, forty in number. These columns are monoliths of yellow-brown stone and are surmounted by Corinthian capitals. From the ceiling of the nave hang lamps in elongated red bags which look like immense *gouttes* of blood about to drop from the roof. On the walls are faint remains of the wondrous mosaics upon which the artists of Manuel Comnenos laboured in the latter half of the twelfth century. It is still possible to see something of the beautiful arcades they designed, in which were curtained altars, something of the wondrous plants they dreamed about bearing incredible flowers and fantastic leaves and of the little company of seven ghostly people who are all that are left on the walls of the ancestors of Christ. The east end of the basilica, including the transept and the choir, is shut off from the rest of the building by a modern wall erected by the Greeks, who have converted the portion thus isolated into a chapel. This chapel is very full of ornament. Its elaborately decorated screen, its carved seats, its crosses, its lamps, its candlesticks, its hanging

balls, its pictures, and its images give it the air of an overcrowded curiosity shop.

From the chapel a flight of narrow steps descend into the Grotto of the Nativity. In this underground chamber, buried as it is a fathom or more deep and accessible only by stairs, it is claimed that Christ was born. It is impossible to conceive of the place as a stable, or to imagine that under any condition it could ever have been put to that use. The Bible, moreover, makes no mention of a cave, while, on the other hand, it states that it was in a *house* that the wise men found the young Child with Mary His mother.

The cave is about the size and shape of a railway corridor carriage, being thirty-three feet long by eleven feet wide and ten feet in height. It has a cove roof, is lined with stiff painted canvas and is furnished as a chapel. It is lit only with lamps, which are said to be thirty-two in number. The actual place of the Nativity is a recess just above the level of the ground, precisely like a modern fire place without a grate. Lamps hang in the recess, while on the hearth is a metal star of some magnitude which was purchased in Vienna in 1852 to replace one that was stolen. In a small cell leading out of the main grotto is a ledge upon which the manger, according to the authority of the church, once rested. The little place has of course its altar. The manger itself is said to be lodged in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

A complex subterranean passage, connected with the Crypt of the Nativity, contains a curious and miscellaneous collection of sacred oddments, such, for example, as the

Chapel of the Innocents where sundry children were slain by the order of Herod, the spot where Joseph received the command of the Angel to flee into Egypt, the tomb of St. Jerome, the cave in which he lived, and the graves of certain of his pupils both male and female.

I had the fortune to witness a service in this Arabian Night Chapel of the Nativity. I saw the ceremony from the stair—the solitary spectator. A number of Franciscan monks, tonsured and sandalled and clad in brown frocks, entered the chapel and at once knelt down facing the niche where the star was laid. They seemed to have crept out of the bowels of the earth, for they were as unreal-looking as a company of gnomes. They hummed a dreamy litany in tones which rose and fell with the rhythm of a wave. The voices, coming out of the cave, sounded hollow and unnatural, while the utterances were those rather of an incantation than a chant. I felt that I was witnessing the ritual of a ghostly sabbath, and that if I stirred the whole strange assembly would vanish. Seen through the doorway at the foot of the stair this little lamp-lit company of kneeling men, in the attitude of the adoring Magi of an old altar-piece, in their medieval dress, with their tapers and missals, formed a scene out of the days of the Middle Ages. One seemed to be looking upon an ancient picture, the figures of which had come to life. The light which lit the faces of the monks, throwing their features into sharp relief, came from unseen lamps, and, as viewed from the stair, might have poured through an opening in the cave from the setting sun of five centuries ago.

XV

THE COUNTRY OF RUTH

AN excellent view of the surrounding country can be obtained from a point on the ridge just beyond the outskirts of Bethlehem. At one's feet an open undulating land stretches away to the heights of Moab, a land almost bare of trees, much partitioned by stone walls, and devoid of any fascination except the one of wide expanse. The near hills are sage green in colour, shaded with brown; the lower fields are a brighter green, being alive with budding corn; while on the uplands are far-extending pastures for sheep.

The cornfields were the scene of the picturesque idyll of Boaz and Ruth, while the grass-lands are the fields of the shepherds where the angel came with 'good tidings of great joy' to the keepers of the sheep. These fields are probably little changed since 'the days when the judges ruled' and when the loyal-hearted Ruth came out to glean. It was down this very slope that Boaz, 'the mighty man of wealth,' must have strolled to his lands in the cool of the evening. He would carry a staff and be followed by a servant. On reaching the cornfields he would greet the reapers in courtly fashion with the

words 'The Lord be with you,' while they, lifting up their faces streaming with toil, would reply heartily 'The Lord bless thee.' Then the great man's eyes would fall upon the figure of a solitary woman glean-ing, and would note that she was a stranger, and that she was small, womanly, and very graceful.

In the valley below the ridge is a little drab village in a thicket of olive trees. But for a muster of these trees here and there the whole expanse would be very bleak. Some way across the low hills is the great rift in the earth which marks the valley of the Jordan, while on the horizon are the mountains of Moab which stand up against the sky like a long lilac-blue bank as level as a wall.

Looking across this featureless country, so poverty-stricken, so miserly, and so threadbare, one cannot but ask: Is this the 'glorious land,' the land 'that floweth with milk and honey,' 'the good land, the land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills'? Is this the land that is sung about in the 'Song of songs, which is Solomon's'? Is there a single spot in the whole wide country to which the conceit would apply—'thine eyes are like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim'? Is this the 'delightsome land' 'where there is no want of anything that is in the earth'?

None will doubt that there was a time when the country was luxuriant and flourishing and worthy of the brave language the writers of old have bestowed upon it. A later time came, however, when the land was to fall upon evil days. The Bible is eloquent as to the griev-

ousness of the coming disaster and is aglow with imagination when the woes that are to be are foretold. The country, as the old script words it, is the country of the scourge, the pit, and the snare. Its cities shall be smitten and its towns deserted ; strangers shall devour the land ; its inhabitants shall melt away ; the highways shall be waste ; the wayfaring man shall cease. The earth shall reel to and fro, the sky shall be darkened, the heavens rent, and the end, when it comes, shall be 'as a bitter day.'

In fulfilment of this lurid forecast the Promised Land has been for centuries ravaged by war and torn by internal dissensions. It has been plundered and laid waste. Its inhabitants have been blotted out, and, as a final calamity, the country, sick unto death, has fallen into the baneful care of Turkey. Forests have been recklessly cut down and woods rooted up. The rainfall has in consequence diminished so that the land has dried up. Vineyard terraces have fallen into ruin and water channels into decay. Obsolete processes of cultivation have been maintained, the people have been harassed and oppressed until there is little joy left in them. Progress has become unthinkable and enterprise a crime. The methods of the Turk might have been foreshadowed in these words from the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel : 'Ye shall . . . fell every good tree, and mar every good piece of land with stones.' One can imagine that over the dumb, lethargic country, with its bare pastures and empty sheep-folds, there comes this cry from out of the mighty past : 'Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria.'

XVI

THE PLAIN OF JERICHO

SOME little way beyond Jerusalem, over the Mount of Olives and on the Jericho road, lies Bethany. It was a village that figured often in the life of Christ—a lovable place of quiet memories. It was the home of Martha and Mary, of that Martha who, like the neurotic woman of to-day, was troubled about many things. It was the scene of the raising of Lazarus. Placed as it is, on the spur of Olivet, it might well have been a village of great charm in the days which made its name for ever memorable. It is now represented by a few wretched hovels, grey, filthy, and ruinous—a slum detached from a city, a pitiless man-hating spot. The houses piled up on the hill would seem to be as empty as a heap of skulls, their staring windows sightless as the eye sockets of the dead. The inhabitants are reputed to be the dirtiest and most importunate in Palestine. This reputation is maintained. The hamlet stands, in all the effrontery of shameless squalor, at the head of a dejected valley. Being on the verge of the desert of Judea the view southward from poor Bethany is very grievous.

Accompanied by a yapping crowd of children, who



BETHANY

are extravagantly unclean, the visitor is taken to the house of Martha and Mary. This is a mere penance observed by pilgrims and others, for the spurious building may as well be called the house of Ananias and Sapphira. He is finally invited by a dozen begrimed hands to enter the tomb of Lazarus, this sepulchre being the joy of Bethany. The children smile through their dirt as they reiterate the invitation, for, seemingly, they know that the burying-place of Martha's brother has changed its site from time to time. It is possible that at this point the tourist rebels, for there is little object in descending into a foul street cellar for the purpose of being shown a grave in which Lazarus did not lie.

The distance from Jerusalem to Jericho is measured, not by miles, but by hours. It is gauged by endurance rather than by mere yards. People speak of the passage as a journey of four hours. This standard of time is based upon the capabilities of two shrivelled horses when dragging a ~~Jerusalem~~ cab between the places named. The cab is professedly a victoria and might have been used in a technical school to demonstrate to a class every form and variety of repair known in the coach-builder's art. The survival of the fittest decides which cab shall be raised to the sublime honour of the Jericho road. The horses who are responsible for the equation of time exhibit no signs of life until the moment for starting arrives. Up to that point they have the appearance of zoological specimens which have been parsimoniously stuffed and whose internal framework is giving way. They seem also to be moth-eaten.

As to our driver it was difficult to judge of either

the character of the journey or of the man by his dress. He wore loose, blue Turkish trousers, completed by very florid socks which were, no doubt, a bequest from a colour-blind tourist. On his feet were shining galoshes. His body was covered by a tweed greatcoat of English make, the cloth of which was so lacking in places that the lining was apparent. It looked almost like a relief map, where an attempt had been made to show the distinctions of land and sea by the use of acids. The coat, being possessed of no buttons, was attached to the body by means of a bright orange scarf wrapped round the waist. The mysterious man's head, neck, and shoulders were enveloped in a black woollen shawl beneath which a crimson tarboosh was visible. On the way to Jericho he seemed to be bored even to nausea, and to be anxious to avoid looking at either the road or the adjacent country as if he disliked them so. He appeared to be limp with fatigue, to take part in the journey under protest, and to share with the horses some deeper feeling than a mere lack of enthusiasm. I began to think that there was something in the malediction 'Oh, go to Jericho !'

The actual road is, for a Turkish road, good, or at least to a great extent. In places it degenerates into a ploughed track or breaks out boldly into a glissade of slippery rock. There are passages where the traveller thinks it safer to walk. There are intervals of rest when repairs in the harness or in the carriage are being made. I noticed, in this connection, that our driver could accomplish most things by means of telegraph wire and string.

As to the country traversed it is a weary desert, grey with melancholy, bare to pitifulness, and silent as a land of the dead. It is not a desert of level sand that stretches away to the horizon like a vast unrippled sea. In such a plain there is at least the solemn impression of immensity, the sense of man as a minute speck creeping across a sphere revolving through space. This desert of Judea is a mean country, a waste of innumerable hills that come rolling in from the unseen like the waves on a shallow beach. They are hills that are dead. Their bones, in the form of grey rocks, show through the tattered covering of threadbare grass and wiry scrub. The whole place is treeless. With the exception of a few goats and a goat-herd there is not a sign of life by the wayside ; with the exception of two humble khans there is not a sign of a dwelling. We would seem to pass 'through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt.'

Over and over again the road labours upwards to the ridge of a hill and then flounders down into a valley, long and winding and as dismal as a ditch. The monotony of the way is unspeakable. It is a road upon which no progress is made, for after an hour of toiling the traveller believes that he has come to the spot he passed an hour ago. On reaching a height, with a hope that the journey's end may be in view, there are only more hills to be seen, while in the valleys the track turns so often that the traveller despairs of ever getting out. This must be some such road as Christian toiled along in Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Here is

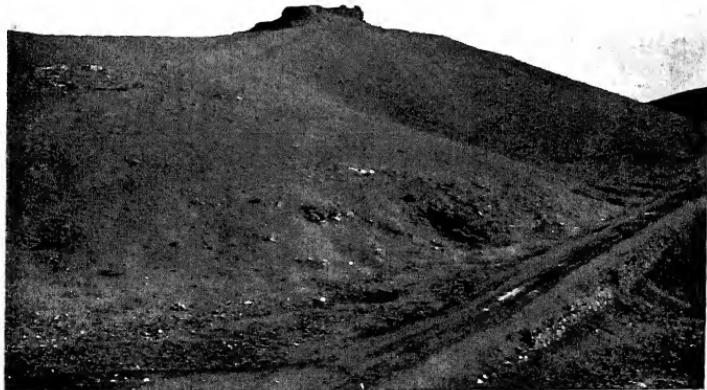
the Hill of Mocking, and here the Valley of Deceit, while at this parting of paths may have stood Mr. Facing-both-ways. As we went on our way we met a few donkeys loaded with panniers, a few dignified and hooded figures mounted on horses, a woman on a donkey, and a shepherd with his sheep. The goats of the country are mostly away from the road, appearing as black dots on the pallid slope. The small round clumps of scrub made a curious effect, for, being of a bluish-grey tint, they looked like puffs of smoke on the scorched hillside.

Some half-way down to Jericho we reached a small caravanserai called the Inn of the Good Samaritan. Its position serves well to illustrate the ancient and familiar parable. While we were there a carriage drew up with a party from Jerusalem, burdened with the presence of a man of fluent knowledge. Bunyan would have named him 'Mr. Knowing-all-things.' He told his friends, with compassionate condescension, that the building was not the actual inn to which the Samaritan brought the man who had fallen among thieves, but that it was built on the site of that tavern. Having delivered himself of this precious item of research he called for a bottle of pale ale.

The inn is on high ground and in a shallow pass. From an eminence near by is a wonderful view across this lamentable desert of a thousand hills. There is not even a bush to be seen and not a sign of a habitation. The far-away heights are lilac in colour, the nearer are a bluish grey, while those at hand have the tint of mouldy hay. The hills upon the horizon may be in the Garden of Eden, but those at one's feet are



THE ROAD TO JERICHO



DOUBTING CASTLE, ON THE ROAD TO JERICHO

so cold, bleached, and sickly that assuredly the sap of the world of all green things has been drained out of them.

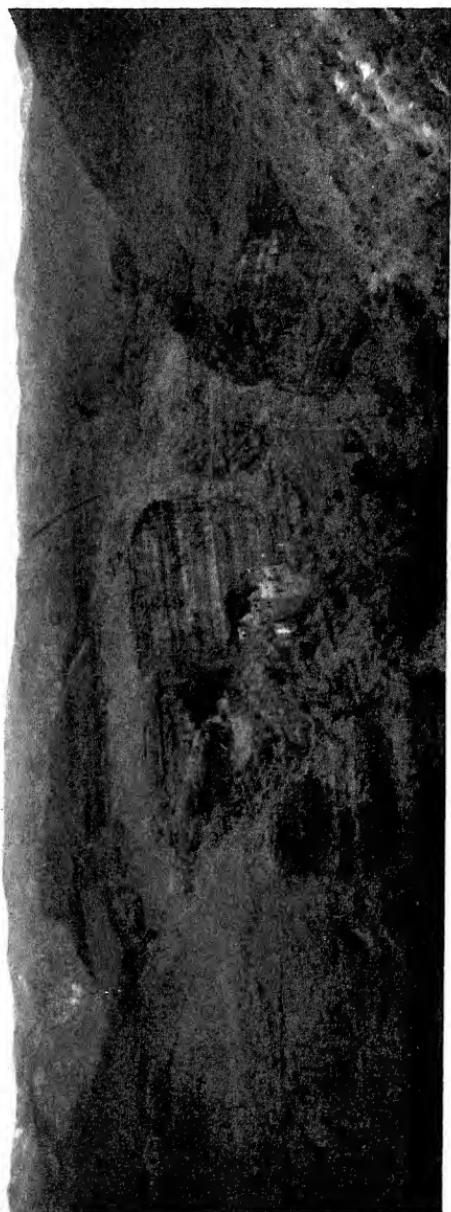
On a neighbouring mound are the ruins of an ancient castle which, once upon a time, commanded the pass through this sorry country. It might very well be that Doubting Castle of Bunyan's dream, where dwelt the giant Despair, but a guide-book says that it is almost certainly the Tour Rouge built by the Templars. It is a castle of rugged stone with, on the least steep side of it, a moat cut out of the solid rock. There are still three vaulted chambers left where men-at-arms must have yawned forth their melancholy at the end of every weary day, and, with closed eyes, have recalled the English villages where they had rollicked as boys, the water meadows, the garden of hollyhocks, the little church and the cawing rooks, and the woods dappled with primroses. There is a passage, too, in the castle leading to a winding stair that mounts to the look-out. Many a burly Templar will have edged his way up these stairs to sicken his heart for the hundredth time by the contemplation of these mocking hills. The stronghold, on the occasion of our visit, was garrisoned by two donkeys and six frivolous kids. In the hall, which was probably the guard-room, was an abject man into whose very bones the misery of the place had evidently eaten. He sat on a stone, with bowed head—a picture of Job when the worst fell upon him.

Beyond the castle of Giant Despair the scenery changes. It ceases to be merely monotonous and

becomes aggressive and fierce. The road tumbles along by the brink of a hideous chasm with rust-brown sides. In the gulley at the bottom of the abyss is a thread of a brook, half hidden by rushes. In the opinion of some this is the Valley of Achor, and, as the dungeon-like ravine opens upon the Plain of Jordan, it may well be called, in the words of Hosea, 'a door of hope.'

There are caves in the walls of this awful valley, in many of which hermits live. From the road these caves look like the holes the sand martin makes in a bank. Clinging also to the face of the cliff is a white building which seems to have oozed out of a fissure in the rock and to have congealed into a drop of masonry. It is the Monastery of St. George, a sanctuary of the Greek Church and a diseased product of religion. It is probably the most ridiculously placed building in the world, as well as the most useless. It must have been the outcome of a disordered mind, for it is just such an impossible fabric, suspended over an abyss, as is met with in the landscapes of delirium.

While we were looking at the monastery from the hill on the other side of the chasm, a monk came out of the building and stood on a small platform or balcony that projected from the wall. Had he taken another step he would have dropped out of sight into the crevice which lay fathoms deep below. His coming was surprising, for the place, although evidently a habitation, could not be associated with the idea of living men. He seemed to gaze with interest in our direction—a being as forlorn as a solitary man on a derelict ship watching a liner steam out of sight. To all appearance



THE VALLEY OF ACHOR, ON THE WAY TO JERICHO, SHOWING THE MONASTERY OF ST. GEORGE

he belonged so little to this busy world of to-day that he might have been a creature of another planet which had drifted so near to the earth as to be separated only by the narrow gap that prevented the two spheres from touching. It would have been quite appropriate if the impossible house, the cliff, and the great strange land beyond it had drifted away and passed out of sight, taking with it the creature who had been near enough to the earth to have a glimpse of its inhabitants.

To some of the hermits' holes a faint path—a mere hazardous ledge—could be seen to lead ; others would appear to be unapproachable. It is said that in ancient days these caves were hiding-places for men ; if so the terror from which they fled must have been too dreadful to conceive. No mere fear of death could have driven men to take refuge in the cracks of this pitiless ravine. These black holes on the face of the cliff serve to express the extremest panic of the pursued as well as the relentlessness of the pursuer, for it is said 'Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them.' As for the crazy hermits and the inhuman monks, these words of Isaiah may very well be put into their gibbering mouths : ' We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes : we stumble at noonday as in the night ; we are in desolate places as dead men.'

At last the Plain of Jericho comes into view. It is very flat, very wide, very featureless. On the other side of the plain are the Mountains of Moab. They form a sheer rampart of bare rock, heavily scored from peak to base. When the sun falls full upon it this great

mountain palisade is wonderful to see. Its cliffs and slopes may then be of as bright a pink as the Malmaison carnation, or of as faint a blue and grey as a wreath of smoke from a wood fire, while every ridge and seam, every gorge and buttress, is marked out sharply by shadows of pure blue. One knows that these hills are of massive stone, but at a distance they would seem to be fashioned out of luminous clouds, and it is thus that they form so vivid a contrast with the solid plain—which is dull drab whenever it is not dull brown, except at one place where a bight of the Dead Sea is inlaid like a plaque of silver. Of the Jordan, or of the course that it follows, there is not the least indication.

The descent to the plain is steep. That part of the flat which reaches to the foot of the hills is wan, barren, and stony. The first vegetation come upon takes the form of a hungry rabble of thorn bushes, bleached of colour and singularly unfriendly. The Bible speaks of 'the prickling briar: the grieving thorn.' No better title can be given to this frontier of the desert of hills than The Country of the Grieving Thorn.

The new Jericho is a pleasant modern village, pleasant mainly by contrast, for although it is both disordered and dirty it is very green. It is a drowsy oasis of red roofs and white walls, with an unexpected chapel and a surprising mosque, with many palms and cypresses, with gardens of tropical luxuriance, and with flowers enough to outweigh many wretched hovels and some display of corrugated iron. Here are orange bushes and banana palms, lanes like those of Devon, vines and oleanders, bamboos and pepper trees, grass without stint, and

hedges of the most profligate green. With such solace it matters little if on one side rise mountains of stone, while on the other side lies a plain the deadness of which is only relieved by blocks and pillars of arid clay.

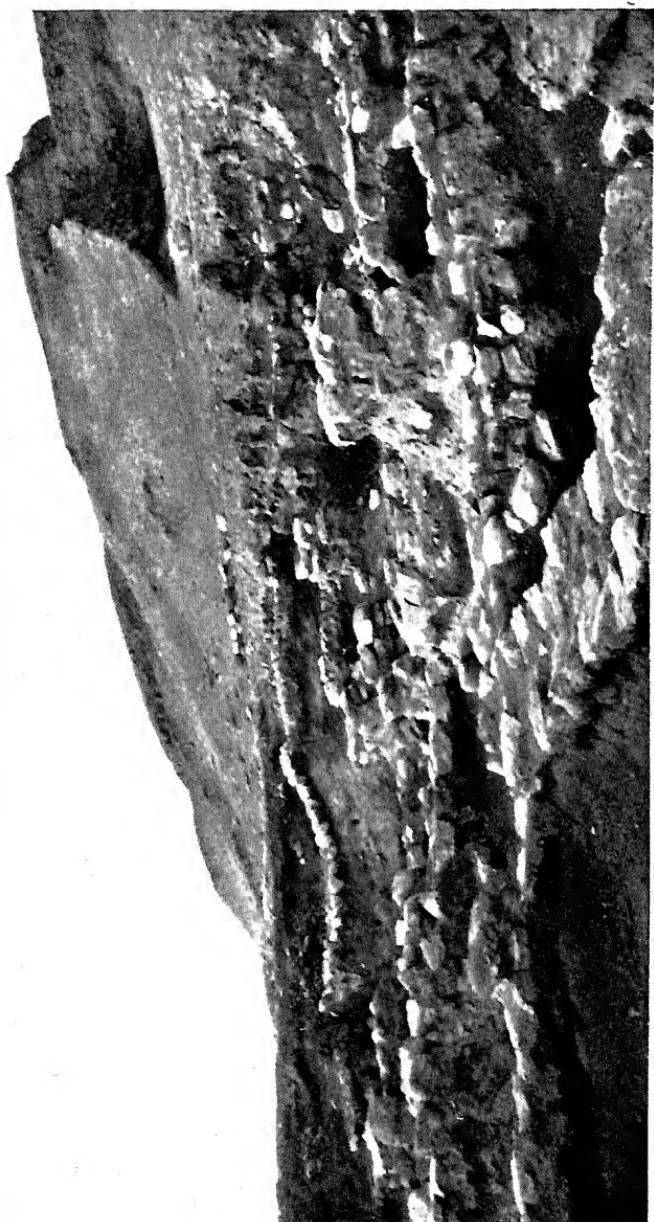
The climate of Jericho is enervating, and in the summer intolerably hot. The circumstances under which King David gave the advice, 'tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown,' were peculiar and must not be considered as of general application, for a worse residence for developing youth it would be hard to find. The whole place is unkempt, savagely luxuriant, reckless, and spendthrift. It is as if Nature had planned here a wild orgy in the midst of a sterile desert.

The ancient Jericho—the city of the old Testament—lies to the west of the modern town with its up-to-date hotels. It stands at the foot of the hills by the side of a generous spring. This spring, known as the Sultan's Spring, is represented by a cheery little river which comes rushing and romping out of the hill like a stream of noisy children bursting out of school. It is a marvellous spectacle, for it bubbles forth with such freshness that it might come from a glacier, while in fact it issues from a mountain of hot limestone as unlikely to give forth water as a heap of ashes. The stream falls into a clear pool flashing with fish, then tumbles headlong over a mill-wheel, and finally flows across the country in a hundred channels which keep green the gardens of the plain.

The makers of tradition call this pool Elisha's Spring, and maintain that these were the waters that he 'healed' by means of a new cruse full of salt. If this be so then

the hill at the back must have been the one he was climbing when the children of Jericho—as careless in manners then as they are now—called after him ‘ Go up, thou bald head.’ It is probable that modern sympathy will be entirely with the children, for the love of ‘ mocking’ is ever strong in them, and it may be suspected that the appearance of the dour prophet lent itself to ridicule. No doubt the children were afraid of him when they met him in the streets, but when he was well up the hillside the temptation to ‘ mock’ must have been irresistible. The boys would begin calling him names first and then the girls would join in. It is a pity that ‘ he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them,’ for the panic produced by the she-bears, as the terrified little people fled back shrieking to the city gate, must have been very dreadful. It would have been quite enough if he had merely turned back and looked on them.

It was up this very hill that the two spies must have crept in the dark after they had escaped from Jericho. They got away from the city by means of a rope that dropped from Rahab’s window into the moat at the foot of the city wall. It was in these very mountains that they hid themselves for three days, while the town guard, after having carefully shut the gate, were fatuously pursuing them towards the ford of the Jordan. From their cave on the hill the spies, lolling at ease, must have seen the perspiring soldiers stumbling over the plain, now rushing forwards and now creeping on tiptoe with uplifted swords towards a bush, then surrounding the bush and finally clubbing it with frightful



EXCAVATIONS OF ANCIENT JERICHO

blows. They must have laughed till they were tired to see the gesticulations of the befogged pursuers, the pointing this way and that, the occasional crawling on the ground, and the constant mopping of puzzled brows. The spies must have seen them also hobble back to the city in the evening, limp with fatigue, and may have imagined the kind of lies they were telling, with such graphic gestures, to the folk who met them at the gate.

It is just by the fountain that ancient Jericho was situated. The site is most commanding. It can be well understood that 'the situation of this city is pleasant,' for with its lavish supply of water it must have sparkled with fountains and pools and have been surrounded by a very Garden of God, together with fields full of corn and hemp, and meadows green with luscious pasture. It was a walled city of some size, a royal city, a military garrison that held the pass to the uplands of Judea. From a strategical point of view its position was of the strongest. It commanded the plain, it held the road westward, it had behind it an inaccessible rock, and yet it was up the pass at the back of the town that Joshua and his army ascended on their way to Ai.

A good deal of the ancient city has been excavated by an Austrian society. Those who have carried out the work have had need to dig deep. The foundations and walls of very many houses have been laid bare as well as much of the city wall. The result is a series of little squares like a collection of cattle-pens. The city wall itself is of considerable substance and of no mean height. It is built of sun-baked bricks very like those

which can still be seen in the humbler houses of the present-day town. It is happily within the power of anyone to indicate the spot on the wall where the two spies were let down by a cord. It is possible to stand at the foot of the wall and, looking up at the parapet, to imagine the site of Rahab's house, 'for her house was upon the town wall,' and even to picture the little window that looked towards the river, in which the spies advised Rahab to bind the line of scarlet thread which was to prove the saving of her life.

From any one of the great mounds that mark the site of the old city there is a view across the plain, and beyond the Jordan to the hills of the land of Moab. One of these mountains must be Mount Nebo, and one of these peaks 'the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho.' It was from this height that Moses, at the end of his long journeying, saw not only 'the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees,' but also 'all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea.' It is somewhere in the valley among these hills that the great leader of men lies buried; 'but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.' The burying-place is worthy of the man, for the mountains are glorious, their fascination is inexpressible, so that in all the world there can be no grander monument to the dead.

The plain that stretches before Jericho was the scene of one of those momentous events in the history of the world which have mightily affected the destinies of nations. This event was the passage of the Israelites over the Jordan and thence into the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua.

Standing on the spot where the regal city of Jericho once rose it is possible to conceive the astounding picture this migration of men must have presented. The whole plain was in alarm. The gates of Jericho were shut, so that 'none went out, and none came in.' The streets were still, for a great terror had fallen upon the people of the town. There hung over the place the hush of impending disaster. There was something moving towards the city that neither walls nor arms could resist. Those who stood, pale and breathless, on the ramparts could see an enormous horde of men moving slowly down the slopes of the mountains of Moab. They came along steadily and silently like a lava stream. The dark mass passed over the Jordan, as if no river had a place there, and then began to pour across the plain in the direction of the awe-stricken city. It was an army such as had never before been seen; an army of forty thousand men 'prepared for war,' followed by the women and the children, the old people, the cattle, and the sheep.

The plain was black with men, and with such men as Jericho knew not of. For no less than forty years these people had been wandering homeless in the wilderness. They were clad in rough garments, or in the tatters of clothing that had been carried with them out of Egypt two score years before. There were few of the fighting men that had not been born on the trail. There were few who could remember any home but the desert. None except the old men and the old women were able to recall the land from which they came. They were a wild, unkempt, terrific folk, an army in rags, an

army of stern, solemn-faced men who marched gravely and in silence. Nothing broke the stillness of the procession but the awful, heart-throttling tramp of over forty thousand feet.

The people of Jericho, who looked from the wall, could see that this fearsome column creeping towards them was headed by men who were carrying a mysterious chest overlaid with gold, and that they bore it upon staves passed through four rings of gold, two rings on one side and two on the other. This was the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth. Before the gold chest went seven priests in strange attire who held in their hands trumpets made of rams' horns. It was not until the outskirts of the trembling city were reached that the quiet of the advancing host was broken, for it was then that the seven blew upon their trumpets ; and as the sound rose shrilly in the van of the great battalion the people of the city were made dumb with horror.

Of all sieges the siege of Jericho is one of the most haunting to read about. There was no rush of storming parties, no clatter of scaling ladders, no crash of battering rams, nothing but the spectacle of forty thousand grim men advancing in silence across a plain, in the wake of a golden chest.

But although the folk of the doomed town were already so 'faint' from alarm that there did not 'remain any more courage in any man,' there was something yet to come which was more dreadful still. The ghastly army made no approach to the gates, but, for seven never-ending days of sickening suspense, that



WALLS OF ANCIENT JERICHO

awful company kept up an ominous march around the town, tramping ever in a silence that was terrible to bear and that was rent only by the blast of the seven horns. It was the mystery and solemnity of the procession that had so dread an effect, together with a horror of the unknown something that lay within the golden chest.

At last, at a given signal, there arose from the beleaguering crowd a shout like that of the bursting of a dam, a shout yelled forth from forty thousand throats, a sound that rattled upon the rocks like thunder, that stilled every beast and bird in the plain, and that brought the walls of the city to the ground ; for it was terror that made good the siege of Jericho.

XVII

THE JORDAN AND THE DEAD SEA

THE interest that is associated with the Plain of Jericho is not wholly dependent upon either the unwonted aspect of the place or upon its strange and tragic story, for above all these things the spot is one of the strange places of the earth. Strange in this—that it is the lowest stretch of land on the surface of the world. The Jordan and the Dead Sea lie in a long hollow in the earth's crust, in a depression that, if viewed from the planet Mars, could be conceived to resemble a dent on a golf ball. Thus it is that the town of Jericho is placed more than twelve hundred feet below the level of the open sea. Thus it is that Jericho, of all human habitations, is the town which is farthest from Heaven ; while those who live there in the summer need not to be reminded that it is nearest to the red-hot centre of the earth.

The road to the Jordan is described in the language of the country as one and a half hours long. This may be interpreted as about six miles. Estimates of distance must vary in this particular spot because there is no road to the Jordan. There is a flat between the village and the stream, the way across which is optional, being

influenced by the depth of the dust in the summer, by the disposition of the mud in the rains, and by the caprice of the driver at other times. The undesigned track has neither been improved nor seriously disturbed since the time when Joshua passed that way. The course followed by the cab of the tourist is necessarily erratic and may as well be regarded as identical with that taken by the deluded town guard of Jericho when they were pursuing the two spies towards the river.

In crossing the plain it will be noticed that it presents a greater variety of colour than could be imagined when it was viewed from the western hills. The soil, such as it is, is cinnamon-brown, but here and there in the distance are drifts of dun-yellow or of oyster-shell grey. The place is covered with scrub which has as little life in it as a covering of lichen. Curious to say, there are a number of camels, with their calves, 'grazing' in this plain. What they find to live on in this pasture of Tantalus is known only to themselves. As the vegetation is as crisp as a cinder, and is of any colour but green, the waste may be a camels' purgatory such as Dante would have imagined, or it may be regarded as a pastoral scene conceived in the spirit of sarcasm. If the camel were an animal capable of appreciating humour, its feeding-ground may be compared to the table of papier mâché chickens and hams upon which people feast riotously at a pantomime.

A solitary tree in the plain, said to be a terebinth tree, is pointed out as marking the site of Gilgal, but, owing to the bumpiness of the road, the tree was difficult to define, for, as the cab rocked to and fro, it expanded

hazily into many trees. There stands also a Greek monastery in the flat, which presents a picturesque appearance. It is a house of rest for Russian pilgrims on their way to the bathing-place of the Jordan.

Before the river is reached there is a curious country to pass through, made up of hillocks and oddly shaped masses of whitish clay. A drearier riverside could hardly be conceived except in the neighbourhood of cement works. As certain of these clay-heaps are square in shape, or are moulded by the rain into the outlines of walls, pillars, or tombs, the whole district looks like the ruin of a cemetery of giants. All along by the side of the still invisible stream is a thicket of bush made up of poplars, tamarisks, and willows, struggling out of an untidy undergrowth.

The sacred river reveals itself in a sudden and dramatic fashion, for there is nothing, even up to the last, to suggest its whereabouts. The visitor, alert with curiosity, sees a muddy stream, the opaque waters of which are a sordid brown, running between banks of slippery mud of the same tint. The stream is swift and silent, and at the bathing-place is about the width of the Cam at Cambridge. This particular spot on the Jordan is stated by the imaginative to be the place of the baptism of Christ, to be the scene of the legend of St. Christopher, and to be the ford where the host of Israel crossed under Joshua to the taking of Jericho. On the other side of the river is a little wood which is pleasant to look upon by reason of its eager vitality, for the stream itself is sullen and indifferent, with as little spirituality about it as there is about a gully in a mud

flat. It would seem to be part of the ritual of the visit to dip a finger into the stream, in order that the traveller may say that he has washed in the Jordan, and, furthermore, to fill a beer bottle from the sacred flood to carry away with him.

From the Jordan the journey is continued, in the same casual fashion as regards roads, to the Dead Sea. The land about the Dead Sea is a level of brown mud precisely like the floor of a wide estuary after the tide has left it. The mud where very dry is cracked, while where very wet it is a bog. It is exclusively mud, for there is not even a stone to be seen. The only evidence of life on the fringe of the sea is represented by some sickly and anæmic bushes the colour of cigar ash, which suggest gorse bushes which have been bleached and dried as are specimens prepared for museums. Mud and pallid bush, indeed, compose the scenery of the shore of the Dead Sea. It is a landscape that is not unpleasant except in its severity and its meagre composition. There is an air of exclusiveness about it, for every storm of rain will wash away, time and again, all trace of footmarks, horse-hoofs, and carriage wheels, leaving the surface as smooth as in the days of the primeval world. Thus it is that the impression is forced upon the mind that the shore is untrodden by man and that the visitor of to-day is the first visitor since time began. This aspect of loneliness, this effacing of all memory of living things, this apparent desire to be cut off from the world, and to obliterate all signs of approach, constitute the only sombre features of the Dead Sea coast.

As for the sea itself it is a beautiful mountain lake

stretching away to the horizon for many a glittering mile, a lake whose waters are a glorious emerald green, suggesting cool, unfathomable depths. The wind ripples it, so that tiny waves, clear as crystal, break upon its beach of bright pebbles. It is a merry and kindly sea, for none can drown in its waters. There is nothing horrible, desolate, or mysterious about it. Its shore is infinitely more charming than the harsh, stony shore of the Sea of Galilee, as seen at Tiberias. The awful accounts of the lake and of its evil moods have been long dispelled. It was said that any bird essaying to cross it fell dead upon its surface, that it smoked with noisome vapours, and that a sulphurous smell hung about its banks. The only thing horrid about the lake is its name. It has been called the Dead Sea, and on this account it has been considered right to endow it with all the gloom appropriate to the scenery of death. It is only a little more salt than the Great Salt Lake in Utah, but no descriptions of that water leave the impression that it is a sea of utter misery and desolation. As a matter of detail the ocean contains some 3·5 per cent. of salts ; the Dead Sea can boast of 26 per cent., and is therefore eight times saltier than the sea ; while the Great Salt Lake was found in 1850 to yield 22 per cent. of saline matters.

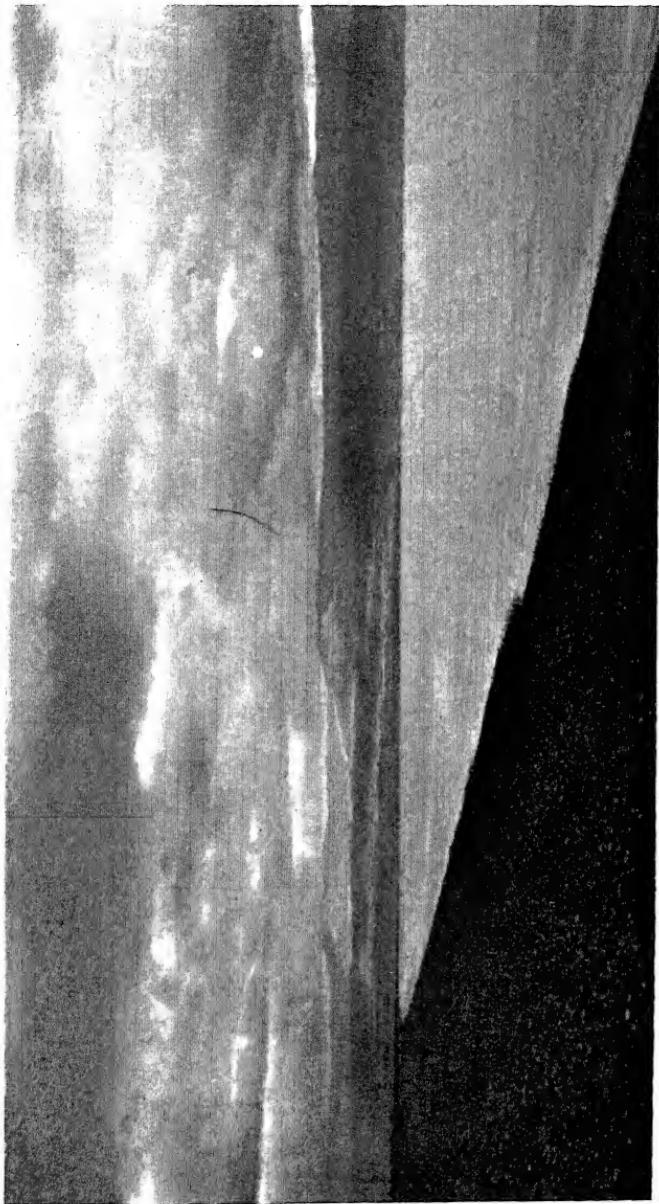
As is well known, the Dead Sea has no outlet. It loses its water by evaporation, while its level varies from time to time to the extent of twenty-one inches—a rise and fall due to the heat of the season, on the one hand, and the amount of water poured in by the Jordan on the other. Standing on the shore of this imprisoned

lake it will be seen that it lies in a trough of stone. Looking southwards it sparkles away until it meets the sky at the horizon, but on either side there are steep and prodigious hills. At the time of our visit the sun, falling upon the Mountains of Moab which form the eastern wall of the lake, had coloured the rock a deep brick-red, so that the precipice was aglow as if lit by a furnace fire. The whole hill was incandescent, so that it would not have seemed wonderful if the water had hissed and steamed as it touched the foot of the cliff. The western wall, formed by the Mountains of Judea, was shrouded in purple shadow, as if the heat were fading out of the stone. It thus comes to pass that the Dead Sea may appear to lie in the hollow of an enormous crucible of red-hot rock where its waters are being evaporated by some unseen fire.

The dull red colour which is met with among the hills of this unparalleled valley serves to make vivid an episode which is described in the Book of the Kings. There was an occasion when three kings of the country were banded together for the purpose of making a raid upon the people of Moab. The Moabites prepared to meet the attack with some eagerness. They were confident of victory, although it was fated that before the sun went down their entire force should be cut to pieces. The narrative runs as follows : The Moabites 'rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood : and they said, This is blood : the kings are surely slain, now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.' The picture is a graphic one to any who have witnessed

the fierce glamour of red in the land. The camp of the three kings, we may imagine, lay in the shadows of the plain, rich and unsuspecting. The hills are aglow, the water is crimson. Suddenly down from the heights, by a hundred paths, pours the wild army of the hillmen yelling out their battle-cry, 'On! Moab, to the spoil!' It seemed an easy onslaught; but the light of blood on the water dazzled their eyes, and it was this mirage that lured them to their deaths.

According to a custom which has been binding upon tourists, time out of mind, I bathed in the sea. The experience was curious. The water was warm and very clear, but it felt oily or soapy and frothed much when agitated. The lake deepens quickly so that it is unnecessary to swim out far. Floating is the natural attitude of all bodies of reasonable weight that drop into the lake. Some ingenious person has discovered that a fresh egg will float in this accommodating sea with one-third of its volume above the water. I found it possible both to dive and to swim under water. There was no difficulty also in making oneself sink. The real trouble was with swimming on the chest, for in that attitude both feet came out of the water at each stroke, so that progress was wellnigh impossible. Swimming on the side was easier, for then one foot was always in the water and therefore efficient. I am under the impression that if an unconscious person were dropped into the Dead Sea the head would sink while the rest of the body would remain floating on the surface, but I am aware that there are difficulties in the way of verifying this impression. The taste of the water was merely salt and by no means



THE DEAD SEA

so nauseous as are certain medicinal waters greedily consumed by the public. The strong saline solution certainly made one's eyes smart severely, while for some time after I had left the lake there was a sensation as if a mustard plaster had been applied to the shaven part of one's face. On the whole, bathing in the Dead Sea will not make the reasonable dissatisfied with the water of the English Channel on a summer's day. On stepping out of the water I caught a glimpse, for the first time, of Mount Hermon covered with snow, while the Mount of Olives stood up so clearly as to delude one with the belief that it was near at hand.

On that part of the beach where tourists most do congregate there is a crude shanty where what is reputed to be refreshment can be obtained. Here were gathered three men and a boat. Near the water are two wooden posts which were said to be the remains of a bathing hut. They represented the failure of some hesitating ambition to found a spa, and possibly later a casino, on these exclusive shores.

One of the most beautiful experiences at Jericho was the watching of the dawn break over the mountains of Moab. The vault of heaven was full of stars. The great line of hills stood up as a mass of black against the faint grey light of the east. The whole fabric of rock, with its level summit—level for miles—looked like a colossal bier covered with a black pall. It was reared to a terrific height against the quickening sky. As the light grew its colour changed from grey to yellow, from yellow to rose pink, until it blazed out into all the glories of the dawn. The slopes of the

range took form, 'the precious things of the lasting hills' began to be revealed, the pall melted away, the plain rose from the abyss, the sea appeared as a sheet of dull lead, the stars faded—and it was day. It would have been in the presence of some such spectacle as this that Amos must have written of Him 'that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning.'

XVIII

ROUND ABOUT HAIFA

IT is customary to proceed from Jerusalem to Haifa by road, passing on the way through the land of Samaria and by the town of Shechem ; but at the time that we contemplated this journey the road was declared to be impassable by reason of the rains. It was necessary, therefore, to return to Jaffa and to proceed thence to Haifa by boat. The voyage occupies some five hours, in which time the steamer passes from Dan to Zebulon, by way of the country of Manasseh. In later times the ship would be described as following the coast of Samaria from one frontier to the other. This same coast is the fringe of the Plain of Sharon and the sea border of the land of the Philistines. It is a low coast, monotonous and featureless, as well as almost bare of vegetation. A cliff the colour of firebrick, broken here and there by a slope of tawny sand, a background of lilac-tinted hills, and a foreground of indigo-blue sea, complete the landscape.

About half-way between the two ports there is to be seen by the water's edge a grey spectre of a town. It is a spectre visible only to those who watch for it, for

to some the place might seem to be little more than a low ridge of white and grey rocks. It is found on a closer view to be made up of miscellaneous ruins of some pretence, humbled by the company of coarse huts and a few modern dwellings of pitiable meanness. This place, that is little more than a grey shadow on the beach, is the imperial city of Cæsarea, the once proud seaport, the city built by Herod the Great—Cæsarea the superb, that was at one period the most important city in the whole of Palestine. It is now a mere wraith, a formless drift of stones and dust tenanted by slum dwellers, and, as Dean Stanley says, the most desolate site in the Holy Land.

The harbour, once full of brilliant galleys and masts fluttering with flags, is nearly silted up ; the mole, at one time crowded by porters and seamen and piled up with bales of goods, is barely traceable ; while the vast amphitheatre, which could accommodate twenty thousand spectators, is indicated only by faint lines. Those who have pored over these ruins, as a scribe over fragments of faded script, tell of high towers and imperious gates, of a great cathedral, of huge bastions, and deep moats, for Cæsarea was a fortress that once withstood a seven-years siege. It is hard to appreciate that this poverty-begrimed settlement, where a book would be a curiosity, was once a seat of learning in whose halls Origen taught. It is harder still to conceive that somewhere in this desolation of dirt stood that imperial court of justice where Paul 'answered for himself' before Festus and Agrippa, and where he made the famous speech in the defence of his life.

Here, according to the legend—in this very spot which could now produce probably no vessel more artistic than a kerosine oil tin—was found the Holy Grail, that cup of green crystal with six sides, out of which Christ drank at the Last Supper. The wondrous story of the Grail varies in the telling, for it closes not with the dread adventures of either Sir Percivale or Sir Galahad. Vary as it may it is difficult to imagine that this ill-smelling fisher town stands for that ‘blessed land of Aromat’ from which

‘After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah’

the good Joseph of Arimathea brought the cup to Glastonbury where the thorn blossoms at Christmas time.

After all, I think the most lamentable part of the Cæsarea of to-day is the little harbour. It comes well into view from the steamer’s deck, the poor, desolate, forgotten harbour wherein for ever ‘shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby.’

Nearer to Haifa is another ruined town—the town of Athlit. It forms a picturesque and romantic pile of ruins, interspersed with the miserable dwellings of a colony of Arabs. Raised aloft on a projecting spur of rock between two bays it seems to spring direct from the Mediterranean, an imposing fortress with high walls, pierced by many loopholes and commanded by a massive tower. Even from a passing ship it can be seen that the stronghold still contains the remnants of buildings of some magnificence. This sea castle was

built by the Knights Templars in 1218 and was finally deserted by them in 1291, so that although over six hundred years have elapsed since the garrison mustered in the courtyard for the last roll-call, although the mighty walls have been battered by wind and sea and shaken by earthquakes, and although the illicit stone dealer has made of the place a quarry, yet the ever-impregnable fortress is even now formidable to look upon. Those who describe the ruins speak of them as 'second to none throughout Western Palestine in massiveness and sublimity,'¹ and certainly no ruins in the Holy Land can exceed them in picturesqueness.

It is said that Athlit was the very last stronghold held by the Crusaders, and that it was here that the Holy War, after it had been maintained for nearly two hundred years, came to an end. Ever since Peter the Hermit had carried his red message like a firebrand through Europe men had hurried from town and village, from palace and hut, to fight under the Cross, to open the way to Calvary, to save from desecration the land that had been trodden by the feet of Christ. It was a war made lamentable by a holocaust of human lives, made glorious by the most self-sacrificing devotion, made horrible by massacre and brutality, and pitiable by foolishness and mad fanaticism.

The ninth and last Crusade was nearing its end. The gallant French King, who was at the head of sixty thousand men, had died on the way. Edward of England, finding further fighting with a shadow hopeless, had sailed for home. Acre had been taken from

¹ Macmillan's *Palestine and Syria*. (London. 1908.)

the Christians ; Tyre and Jaffa had fallen ; so that the only place left in the Holy Land for the foot of the soldier of Christ was the castle of Athlit. The fortress was besieged, and by such a force that any long resistance was hopeless. Thus it was that in the great Banqueting Hall (the ruins of which are still to be seen) the Templars met to celebrate mass for the last time. Then, when the sun was set, they filed in silence out of the water-gate and down the steps to the boats. The ships were already waiting in the little harbour, so that when the Moslems entered the castle the next morning it was empty : the last band of Christian soldiers had passed away out of sight, and the great Crusade was ended.

The ridge of Mount Carmel ends by the brink of the sea in a green and comfortable headland. On the north side of this promontory is the smooth-shored Bay of Acre, a bay so even of curve and with so level a beach that the sea appears to be encompassed by a sickle of polished sand. On the far corner of this gulf and under the shelter of Mount Carmel lies the town of Haifa. There is no harbour in the place, but the high land protects the anchorage from winds which come out of the south and the east. By the time that the steamer dropped her anchor at the foot of Mount Carmel a strong north-west breeze was blowing. The captain had mentioned the fact that every winter he expected to encounter about three gales along the Syrian coast. This was one of the three. Later on we had the misfortune to experience the second of the series.

Although the promontory affords some shelter from the west there was a moderate sea running. The

arrangements for landing at Haifa fall very short of perfection, while the boatmen lack the efficiency and verve which mark their brethren at Jaffa. The benevolent protection of Mount Carmel has not fostered hardihood, it would seem, so that when the wind runs strong from the north those who 'follow the sea' are apt to do so by leaning over a sheltered wall and watching the waves. In spite of the fact that we reached the 'Mount of God' at 5.30 P.M. we did not land until nine at night. The same long galleys are employed as at Jaffa, but those who labour at the oars are spiritless and dejected and may possibly be the descendants of the mariners who, when St. Paul's ship was in trouble, despondently 'cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.'

The night was the very blackest I can call to mind. The first boat took away into the gloom a large native family with much eccentric luggage and five children. What with the darkness, the staggering of the ship, the howling of the wind, the lashing of the sea, and the yelling of neurotic boatmen, this disembarkation was a sufficiently close reproduction of a shipwreck at the moment of the order 'Women and children first.'

The women were handed over the side in the form of shapeless and perverse bundles, full of protest. They dropped out of sight into the murk. The children, being unwilling to be lowered into an apparently bottomless pit full of horrid sounds, clung to the ship, inch by inch, screaming and shrieking the while, as if Jonah's whale awaited them below with open mouth. In due course we reached a boat, or at least a boat reached us by rising out of the unseen. The moment it became

visible we were pushed into it with scant notice. Then came an intolerably long row towards some lights, such as would be produced by four candles placed wide apart, the same representing the city of Haifa. So profoundly dark was it that we might have been rowing on the Styx, while the man smelling of mould who asked us for baksheesh might have been Charon himself.

After a while the rowing ceased, the oars were unshipped without apparent reason, and I then found, by the sense of touch, that we were alongside a rough wall. Whether it was three feet high or thirty it was impossible to tell owing to the blackness of the night. My wife and the dragoman disappeared vertically into the air, having been drawn heavenwards by some invisible agency. I then felt myself gripped about the shoulders and arms and lifted out of the boat, to be deposited on my knees on some sharp stones. I believe this translation was the work of man, but as I saw no living creature, as the silence was unbroken, and as no one asked for baksheesh, this impression cannot be confirmed.

I rose to my feet and proceeded to walk in the only direction that had any attraction—viz. away from the boat. I stumbled over a series of malignant obstacles, and finally, having tripped many times, fell heavily forwards. I alighted upon a large and soft substance, which proved on examination to be the body of a fellow tourist. Before I could ask if it was well with him he exclaimed: 'I have found out where we are: we are on a railroad.' It would have been less

unexpected if he had announced that we were in the cave of Adullam or in a street in Appii Forum. He asked me to feel the rail upon which he was lying. I did so, but found it in no way different from those to be seen at Clapham Junction.

Continuing our progress in the same direction we came into more or less violent contact with every article employed in the equipment of a railway. It was as instructive as a rough kind of kindergarten for the blind. We tripped over 'points,' fell upon shunting levers, came up against trucks as against invisible walls, and rested for a while on a heap of clinkers. Proceeding more boldly we simultaneously fell down a bank and rolled on to what proved to be a firm stretch of wet sand. Upon this unexpected shore waves were breaking, and as we wished no further communion with the sea we turned towards what we believed to be the Holy Land. After a few steps I once more collided with a large soft substance which proved this time to be a live horse. I proceeded to feel my way along the animal to the tail. Here I discovered a cab attached, and near by my wife and the dragoman, who had arrived here along a recognised path and had assumed that I was following.

An examination of the spot on the following day revealed a rough railway pier, on the deep water side of which we had landed. Instead of following the pier longitudinally, as is customary when walking on piers, we had crossed it from side to side.

Having got into the cab we set out to drive through a mysterious black town, the extreme vileness of the

road giving us the assurance that we were once more on Turkish soil. The town was such a one as Gustave Doré loved to depict. It appeared to be deserted, as if stricken by the plague. A little light came here and there from under a door or through the cracks of a shutter. We rattled along a narrow lane, across such a square as cloaked bravos would haunt, and under an alarming arch which might have led to a dungeon. The houses seemed fantastic in shape and as full of horrible surmise as the city of a nightmare. I thought it was the most dramatic-looking place I had ever seen. There were appearances of loopholed walls, of barred windows with people watching behind, of sinister entries, of blank houses in which dread crimes had been committed, and of frightful gutters with shadows in them like the shapes of men. Daylight displayed next morning a modern town of the most commonplace aspect and of the dullest respectability, in which any hint of romance was dispelled by that severe crudeness of detail which marks the unaspiring Mediterranean town. It was inconceivable that the City of Dreadful Night could ever have been evolved from this city of insipid day.

We found at the hotel at Haifa a party of three derelict men who were consumed by excusable melancholy. They had come from Constantinople to Beyrouth, intending to proceed to Damascus by train, but, finding the railway to that town blocked with snow, they proposed to go at once to the goal of their pilgrimage—Jerusalem. With this object they took ship from Beyrouth to Jaffa, but owing to the violence

of the sea they could not land at this town and so were carried on to Port Said. Having exhausted the limited joys of Port Said they again essayed to go to Jaffa, but were taken past this jade of a place for the second time—the sea being still implacable—and were deposited once more at Beyrouth, a place for which they had already acquired a marked distaste. They started once again from Beyrouth to Jaffa, but, encountering by the way the same storm that had troubled us, were assured that landing at Jaffa would be impossible, so they were put ashore, with much muttering, at Haifa. They spoke boldly of going to Jaffa by road—a feat of no mean daring in the winter—and sought, in the while, relief from their woe by constantly repeating certain pleasantries about the land that floweth with milk and honey. They also gave all within earshot to understand that this was their last visit to Palestine.

The German quarter at Haifa is the most pleasant part of the town, being admirably laid out, and full of well-built houses with many a charming garden. Since the establishment of the German Colony, Haifa has made rapid and substantial advance, being now a flourishing seaport with 15,000 inhabitants, together with commerce of some magnitude.

To those who sojourn at Haifa the Holy Mountain is ever present, so that it is possible to appreciate at leisure 'the excellency of Carmel.' The mountain takes the form of a ridge which runs inland for some fifteen miles, forming a great dividing wall between the Plain of Sharon on the one side and the Plains of Acre and Esdraelon or Jezreel on the other. The 'Carmel by the Sea' forms a

headland 560 feet in height, but inland the mountain grows in stature as it advances, terminating opposite to the low hills of Samaria in a bold cliff which is 1800 feet above the level of the Mediterranean. The slopes of Carmel are green with trees and bushes, among which are many oaks and almond trees. It is therefore in agreeable contrast with the hills about Jerusalem and the Jordan.

On the summit of the sea headland is the famous Carmelite monastery. The monks of the Order appear to have been established here since about A.D. 1200, their tenancy having been interrupted on occasion, during the subsequent seven centuries, by the violence of unbelievers. The present monastery dates, in its main parts, from 1828. The visitor to this retreat is offered a choice of delights: he can either see, for the sum of six piastres, the cave in which Elijah is reputed to have dwelt, or he can purchase for a larger outlay a bottle of liqueur manufactured by the monks and called 'Eau de Mélisse.' If these curiously combined attractions avail nothing there is at least the view which commands the coast from Tyre to Cæsarea and the hinterland from Mount Hermon to the heights beyond the Jordan. This extensive panorama takes in a very considerable part of Palestine, affording thereby a conception of the comparative smallness of the country.

Carmel stands out conspicuously in the history of the Holy Land, being the scene of many events recorded in the Old Testament. It was in Carmel that that astute woman Abigail met David, and it was under the shadow of the hill that he married her. She was, it may

be remembered, 'a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance.' She was also a woman of fluent and voluminous speech, with a great deal to say for herself. Her first husband was a source of trouble to her, being not only churlish in his manner, but also 'evil in his doings.' Abigail, although apparently a torrential talker, may be commended for her terse and restrained description of her spouse, since in her harangue to David she summed up the unfortunate man in the following brief words: 'Nabal is his name, and folly is with him.'

XIX

ACRE

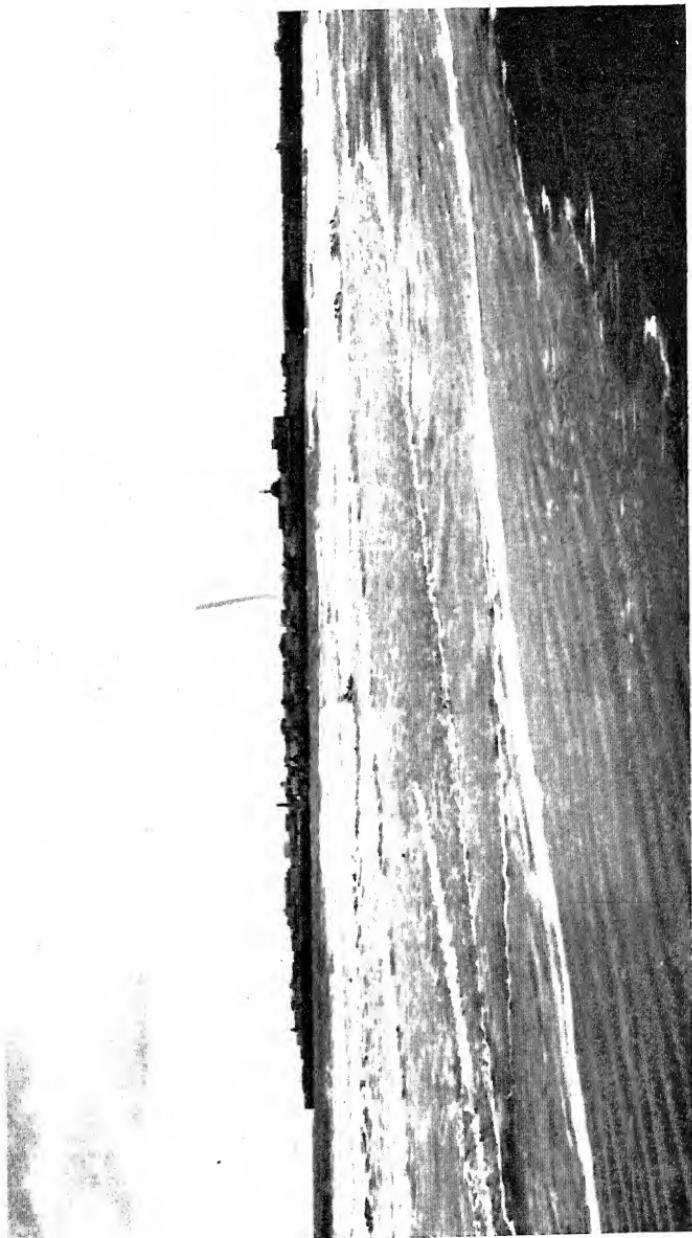
THE place of greatest interest near Haifa is Acre, which stands at the far point of the bay, at a distance, according to Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, of three parasangs. The road from Haifa to Acre is the best in Palestine, for it is a road not made by man. The traveller drives along the beach, round the curve of the bay, from the one town to the other. The shore is of level sand, wet with the sea, and so firm that the carriage wheels make scarcely a mark on it. The journey is one of great delight. When we passed along that way the sea, freshened by the winter wind, appeared to be effervescent. Beyond the beach were the dunes of wind-rumpled sand, a golden country of many dips and dells and of many mimic thickets of reedy grass. Far away beyond the dunes was a wide semicircle of hills which shut out the world. Stalking along the beach was a caravan of camels with sundry horsemen and sack-laden donkeys. About this picturesque procession fluttered a number of gulls who had been disturbed in their wading.

At some little distance from Haifa we drove across a stream on the point of entering the sea. It was a

singularly modest stream that seemed only anxious to efface itself and to steal into the ocean unobserved. It crept across the sand like a person treading noiselessly. Many a traveller driving to Acre may fail to observe that he had crossed a river by the way. This very unobtrusive stream is no other than the famous River Kishon—‘that ancient river, the river Kishon,’ that witnessed the defeat of Sisera’s host and was reddened with the blood of the slaughtered prophets of Baal.

Nearer to Acre another stream is crossed—the River Belus. Some legend exists that with the sand by the banks of this stream the Phoenicians first learned to make glass. This shadowy report caused Sir John Maundeville—the knight who came from St. Albans in England—to break out into circumstantial lying. He says that near to the river ‘is the foss of Memnon, which is all round ; and it is one hundred cubits broad, and all full of gravel, shining bright, of which men make fair and clear glasses. Men come from far, by water with ships, and by lands with carts, to fetch of that gravel ; and though ever so much be taken away thereof one day, on the morrow it is as full again as ever it was. And that is a great wonder. And there is always great wind in that foss, that continually stirs the gravel and makes it troubled ; and if any man put therein any kind of metal, it turns to glass, and the glass made of that gravel, if it be thrown back into the gravel, turns to gravel as it was at first ; and, therefore, some men say that it is whirlpool of the gravelly sea.’

Acre, as seen from the bay, stands boldly out into the sea, like a far-reaching rock whose extreme point



ACRE, AS APPROACHED FROM HAIFA

is lost in water fathoms deep. In the place of rock is a long dark wall rising out of the sea, a wall heavily fortified, with here and there a postern and at one spot a cavern-like sea gate. Behind are piled-up houses, brown, blue, and white, with red roofs or yellow cupolas and sun-shutters of bright green, for Acre stands full in the glare of the day. There are besides alert minarets, a stolid dome, a tower, and certain high buildings which rise above the rest as if to get a glimpse of the sea. In its setting of jade-green water and maise-yellow sand, Acre from afar is an enchanting town of many colours. The entrance to the town is through the solitary land gate by which alone it is possible to go in or to come out. Acre from its very earliest days has been a place of war. It has had neither leisure nor inclination for the arts of peace. It has been a fortress, never a home. It has been a town of men. The sounds that would be familiar to Acre, above the roar of the sea, have been the clatter of arrows, the hail of catapult stones, the pounding of battering rams, the roar of cannon, the rattle of guns. It seems to have been first besieged on a worthy scale in A.D. 638, and to have been last bombarded in 1840. During the intervening twelve hundred years it was many times taken and retaken, was burned on occasion, starved on occasion, and on occasion laid silent by the plague. It was the chief landing-place of the Crusaders, and was for long the principal Christian stronghold in the Holy Land.

It is still a wholly masculine town. There are now women and children in the place, but they have done little as yet to soften the harsh features of this

war-battered fortress. Acre is a place of immense walls, too massive to ever fall into decay. There is a great moat on the land side of the town that the rubbish of centuries will never fill up. There are fragments of towers, vaulted chambers, narrow passages roofed with stone, gigantic storehouses, magazines fashioned of heavy masonry, and streets that are mere alley-ways between barracks and military works. Around all are the great ramparts, and although these are of comparatively modern date there are yet in evidence walls of all ages, among which it is not difficult to find traces of bastions and redoubts built and held by the Crusaders. More than that, some remains are to be seen of the Crusaders' Church. This city of alarms is still a military station. The soldiers who compose the garrison are as ruinous as the fortifications. They are shabby and slovenly, ill-clad and ill-shod, so as to appear like an army of tramps holding a beggared citadel. The guide-books say that there are few antiquities in Acre. This may be expected, inasmuch as twelve hundred years of bombardment and assault are not calculated to assist in the preservation of ancient monuments.

From Acre can be seen the romantic promontory known as the Ladder of Tyre, beyond which headland lie Tyre and Sidon, both of which are sunk now into a state of hebetude and obscurity. We were not able to visit Tyre, but the photographs of the place show it to be the humblest of little towns. Yet there was a time when Tyre was 'the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of

AVATTS OF ACRE



the earth.' Tyre was the mistress of the seas, and Ezekiel speaks in fine words of her ships whose timbers were of pine from Senir, whose masts were of cedar wood, whose oars were of oak from Bashan, and whose sails were made of 'fine linen with broidered work from Egypt' in colours of blue and purple. What the prophet foretold of Tyre has come to pass: her walls have been destroyed, her towers have been broken down; she has become 'like the top of a rock: . . . a place to spread nets upon.'

XX

THE ROAD TO NAZARETH

THE distance from Haifa to Nazareth is said to be twenty-four miles, the road to be fairly good, and the time of the journey to be four to five hours. We found the miles phenomenally long, the journey to occupy six hours, and the road to be fairly bad. For some eight miles the way lies close to the foot of the Carmel range, skirting the level plain of Acre. It is a pleasant country enough, for the plain is extensively cultivated and the slopes of the hill are green with trees and bush. We passed through olive groves, by thickets of mimosa, through plantations of mulberry trees, and by hedges of prickly pear. We also came upon abject villages, incredible in the display of dirt, and upon frowsy women drawing water at a well. The Eastern woman at the well, as depicted by artists in regular succession for many centuries past, is a picturesque creature, but when the woman of Samaria is dejected and unkempt, when she is decked in a cheap Manchester skirt which is both wet and dirty, and when her pitcher is a kerosene oil tin, she is not pleasant to look upon. There was, furthermore, by the wayside a shepherd

clad in a Joseph's coat of many colours. It was in reality a cloak, patched with rags of every hue under the sun—yellow, red, blue, brown, and white. I am under the impression that the man was something of a poseur and that he combined the tending of sheep with a remunerative mumming for the benefit of tourists. He was a little overdressed for the part and was evidently willing to be photographed for a consideration. It is probable that many scores of albums, devoted to 'snap-shots from the Holy Land,' contain a portrait of this yokel in fancy dress, above the title of 'Joseph.'

In due course the Kishon is crossed and we draw near to the circle of wooded hills which encloses the flat towards the east. About this spot a certain green kopje is pointed out which is believed to be the site of Harosheth of the Gentiles, a stronghold held by Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army. Here, in this quiet stretch of country, the great battle between Sisera and Barak was fought. It was about Harosheth and the Kishon River that Sisera marshalled his people, a savage host of filibusters who for twenty years had 'mightily oppressed the children of Israel.' In front of this array of buccaneers and cattle-raiders were drawn up, in a solid line, Sisera's 'nine hundred chariots of iron.' It must have been a stirring picture, since the advancing army, led by Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kadesh-Naphtali, was composed of no less than ten thousand warriors.

There was a strange feature about Barak's army. In the centre of the host of ten thousand determined men, who were making the last stand for hearth and

home, marched a solitary woman. Unarmed and unattended she was yet mistress of this throng of spears. Her eyes were ablaze, her voice rang far, and the words that she uttered moved the hearts of the vast company 'as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.' This was Deborah. She walked with head erect as if she were Bellona, the Goddess of War. As she walked she sang. Her spirit thrilled the veins of the fighting men who advanced to the music of her step. She gave strength to the arm that hurled the javelin and nerve to the hand that drew the bow. Although she uttered no word of command, yet she led the field, for Barak had said to her: 'If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.'

It was the woman against the chariots of iron, and the woman was the victor. Sisera's great force was cut to pieces. Of the entire army of reckless brigands who had stood jeering behind the strong line of iron chariots only one solitary man escaped. That man was Sisera himself. Jumping from a chariot already cumbered by its dead charioteer he fled away on foot across the plain. He had escaped one woman: he was destined that day to fall into the hands of another woman—into the strong, relentless hands of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite. The episode is graphically dealt with in the Book of the Judges. It is told how Jael called to the flying general, how she invited him into her tent, gave him milk to drink, and covered him over with a cloak as he lay on the ground weary and breathless. He begged her to stand at the door of the tent and watch. She did; but she watched only the tired man under the cloak.

When he was fast asleep she went softly to him and drove a spike through his skull with such intensity of hate that his head was staked to the ground.

The road now mounts up the slope of the wooded heights which have faced us for so many miles. We pass for a little while through an enchanted country, through a forest of oaks and by green luxuriant glades. From the summit of the hill is a view of the Carmel range and of the whole length of the plain we have traversed since we set out upon the journey. Haifa is a mere splash of pure white on the edge of a sea of pure blue. Before the hill dips again there comes into sight another great plain, the Plain of Jezreel, a level, monotonous, treeless country, brown where the plough has lately passed, green where the corn is rising from the earth. It stretches away below us for many miles, the field upon which were fought the fiercest battles of the people of Israel.

This is the land, too, of Jezebel, since, some way off, on a spur of the mountains of Gilboa, stands the town of Jezreel. The town is in a line with a hill called Little Hermon, which is pointed out to the traveller many times before the journey ends. Below the town lay Naboth's vineyard. It was in this vineyard that the tragic meeting took place between Ahab and Elijah. Ahab was strolling among the vines, smiling to himself, for his heart was full of delight. The coveted vineyard at last was his. Naboth was dead—had been murdered in fact—so the king had gone down to the vineyard to possess it. He was pleasantly engaged in planning in his mind how he would lay it out as

a garden of herbs in pursuance of a scheme he had long cherished. At a certain turn in the path the king's exulting steps were suddenly arrested. He staggered as one smitten with a palsy, for standing before him in the way was the stern, implacable figure of Elijah the prophet. 'And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee.' It is recorded in the Book of the Kings that Ahab, before he died, built many cities and that he made for himself an ivory house, but there is no chronicle to show that he ever laid out the garden of herbs that had so long filled his dreams.

Near to the hill of Little Hermon is a village called Sûlem, which has been identified as the Shunem of ancient days. It was here that dwelt the kindly woman who built a little chamber on the wall of her house for the use of Elisha, who was continually passing through the village on his way to or from Mount Carmel. It may be remembered that she furnished it very simply with merely a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. Not long after the chamber was finished she had a son. He died when he was still a little boy and the woman laid the dead body upon the bed in the chamber on the wall, while she went to Mount Carmel to fetch Elisha. It is possible to see from the hilltop nearly the whole of the ground she traversed on her way from Shunem to the mountain.

Literature contains, both in history and in fiction, many accounts of the dying of children. Certain of these descriptions are finely written and are full of pathos, while many are so over-elaborated as to be



NAZARETH

mawkish and artificial. It may be doubted if a more exquisite or more vivid account of the death of a small boy, from sunstroke after playing in the harvest field, could be furnished than that set out in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings. From the high road to Nazareth the traveller looks down upon the very corn-fields where the child played, and it is easy to imagine even in the time of the rains the intense heat of the flat on a summer's day. The account is given in these words: 'And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.'

The road curving down the far side of the height crosses the plain and begins to mount up the hills on the other side. Among these hills Nazareth is hidden. It is a sorry country, for the land is bare, harsh, and treeless. The slopes are grey with stones, while the misery of the place is deepened by the starving scrub which struggles to live among the rocks. Here is assuredly to be seen the poverty of the earth. When the high ground is reached there is once more a wide view of the plain, of the humble hills of Samaria, of Little Hermon, and of Mount Tabor, a lonely, dome-topped mountain, wizened and bleak. The treeless plain is cultivated in rectangular patches, which are green where the corn is springing and brown where it is as yet unsown. So

level is it that it looks like a faded green carpet, patched and darned with odd squares of russet.

In this drear spot, at the foot of a melancholy hill, stands Endor, where, on a certain night, the witch saw rising out of the earth the figure of an old man covered with a mantle. By the side of the crone a trembling man grovelled on the ground, with his face to the earth, for he dared not look upon the spectre. This man was Saul, the King of Israel. It was not until the phantom had vanished that the king rose and sat upon the edge of the bed, weak and sore distressed, and still stunned by the awful words he had heard spoken. Dreary as the house of the witch must have been in the light of the sun, it would be a place of horror in the depths of the night.

Not far from Endor the dragoman points out in this panorama of strange towns and stranger happenings a cluster of huts surrounded by a cactus hedge, and states that it represents the city of Nain, where the widow's son was brought back to life as he was being carried out of the town to be buried. This citizen of Nain was one of the few human beings who have been in a position to witness and to criticise his own funeral.

XXI

NAZARETH

NAZARETH clings to the slope of a hollow among the highlands of Galilee. It is surrounded by a semicircle of hills, said to be fourteen in number, and is a place hidden away from the sight of men. It is open only to the road that leads up from the plain along a shallow valley. In this valley are many fig trees. Those that are old and bare of leaves would seem to be fashioned out of grey coral, while at a distance a thicket of such ancients has the appearance of smoke trailing along the ground. In the valley also are pomegranates, oranges, a few palms, many olive trees, straggling vineyards, and hedges of prickly pear. Nazareth lies in a cul-de-sac at the end of this dale. Its houses are ranged far up this slope so as to convey the impression of an amphitheatre among the mountains. The houses being built of white limestone the town is white. These white walls, and the verdant valley which flows like a stream of green towards the plain, are the only charm that Nazareth possesses beyond its memories of the past.

This home of Joseph and Mary is a hill town that

calls to mind some remote village in the barrenest part of Derbyshire. The valley of fig trees is pleasant enough, but the whole of the high land that surrounds the place is lamentable in its leanness and destitution. The hills about Nazareth are naked, being littered with rocks and stones which have been washed by the rain and bleached by the sun to the colour of dry bones. The modern name of the town is en-Nasirah, which is by interpretation 'The Victorious.' It is an unexpected title which may be assumed to indicate the victory of man in planting an outpost of the living in this territory of the dead.

It was in this land of stones that Christ spent the first thirty years of His life, the most impressionable period of a man's days, while it was amidst these grey surroundings that the great religion of the world came into being. The country is harsh and sterile, unkindly and unsympathetic, a country where life must have been hard and its pleasures ungenerous. The problem of living was here reduced to its most rudimentary factors, to the crudest conception of man in his struggle with the grudging earth. The human life that Christ looked out upon was life at its simplest and sternest, while at Nazareth two thousand years ago the now complex fabric of society must have presented but an elemental form. The town, lost among the hills, was cut off from the rest of the world, was far away from the tide of human affairs, being as secluded as a hermit's cave.

There was one joy, nevertheless, ever present and ever precious in the town of Nazareth. It was this: from any gap in the steep street, or from any crag on



A STREET IN NAZARETH

the desolate heights there stretched a view down the valley and across the mighty plain to the distant hills. It was a vision of green prairie and of purple steeps, a prospect full of hope, of emprise, and of imaginings. It was the joyous way that led out into the world. It was by this enchanted road that Christianity started on a journey which was destined to lead to the ends of the earth. It was this green valley, open to the south, that guided the flight of the messenger of peace. It was down this dale that the ray of light, pouring from one small window in the town, spread fan-like over the surface of the world. Such is the wonder of Nazareth to this day, the wonder that belongs to the birthplace of a great faith.

The most conspicuous feature of modern Nazareth is afforded by the immense and imposing buildings of stone which rise from among the mean dwellings of the town. These are Christian edifices of various kinds, convents and monasteries, orphanages, churches and schools. As is the case with other sacred towns in Palestine, Nazareth is the scene of a very acute religious competition. If one Christian sect erects a palatial convent it is incumbent upon some other Christian sect to found an opposition building of still greater pretence. These arrogant buildings provide an unedifying spectacle of that bitter civil warfare which engages the world of Christendom. There is within the circuit of this little hill town a sufficient army of religious folk, equipped with sufficient 'means of grace' to convert a continent, and yet the visitor is warned in the guide-book that 'the inhabitants are noted for their turbulent disposition.'

Nazareth is not a Christian town because the followers of Christ are apparently more concerned in discomfiting their co-religionists than in bettering the state of the people about their doors. Nazareth, outside the walls of religious magnificence, is a poor place, a town of narrow and dirty streets, of unwholesome houses, of miserable slums, and of by-ways that stink with a stink not soon to be forgotten. The villages around Nazareth are among the most abject and the most filthy I have any recollection of, being composed of little more than a few pitiable huts clustering around a heap of manure as around a thing of joy.

If one hundredth part of the money spent upon the religious buildings of Nazareth had been devoted to teaching the people to be clean, to making the town healthy, and to improving the condition of the needy, Nazareth would be a happier place than it is at this moment. The contrast between the superb stone convents, and the dens of squalor with which they are surrounded, is a remarkable anomaly. When Christianity in Nazareth has exhausted the possibilities of bombast and display, and condescends to the dwellings of the poor, it will be well with the place, for then possibly the teaching of Him Who was meek and lowly may reach to the life of the people. An exception must be made of the British Hospital at Nazareth which, without ostentation, carries out a valuable work of pure benevolence.

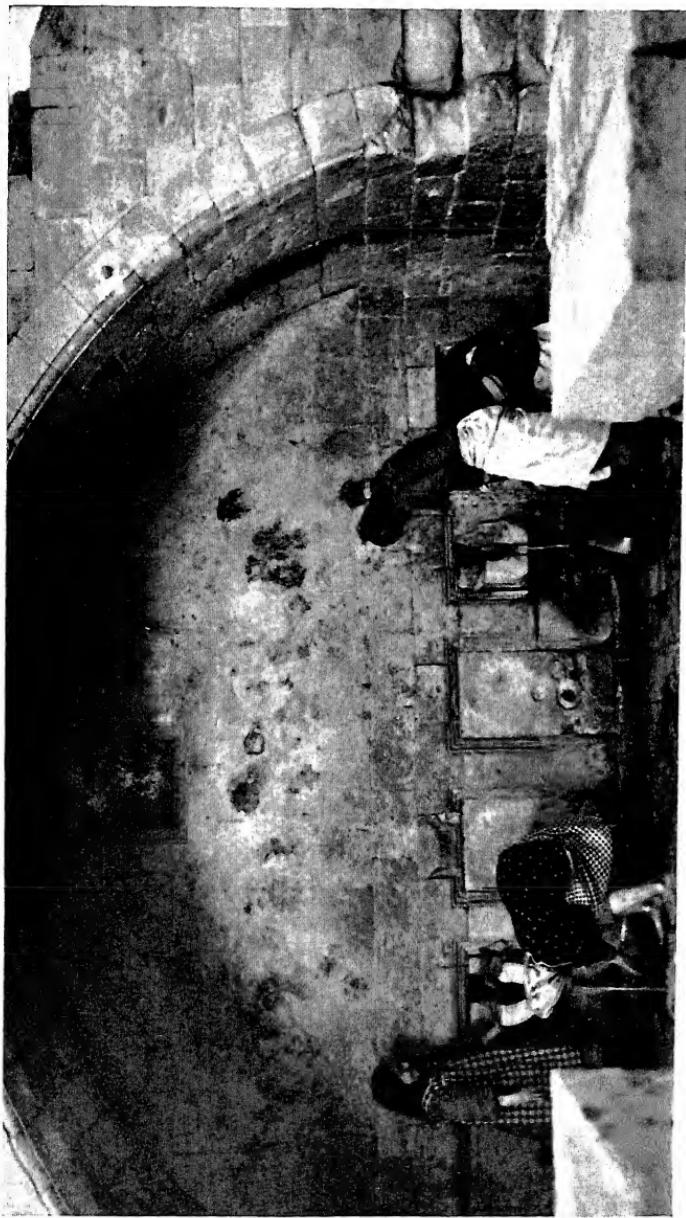
The Church of the Annunciation is built over the site of the House of the Virgin. This house, it would appear, was a cave—so that Joseph and Mary must

have been cave-dwellers. The place of the Annunciation is also underground, and, as accuracy is important, a column marks the spot where stood the angel Gabriel, and another column the place where the Virgin received the angel's message and was troubled in her mind as to what the salutation meant. This cellar-like spot is a sad shock to those who have delighted in the scenery of the old pictures that portray the Annunciation. It is evident that Fra Giovanni Angelico did not receive the inspiration for his frescoes from this rock-cavern under a church.

The visitor, now hardened and disillusioned in the matter of holy sites, can see without shrinking the kitchen of the Virgin and even the chimney of the same. The apartment, however, is not even a cave but is, in point of fact, an ancient water cistern, the opening into which plays the part of the chimney. There are other harassing discrepancies about the House of the Virgin of greater moment. The monks at Nazareth show the dwelling with a complacency which is unruffled by the fact that the real dwelling of the Virgin is at this moment in Italy—where it takes the form, not of a cave, but of a stone house, twenty feet in length and twelve and a half in width, the same being described as very simple. It may be stated at once that the Christian Church in Italy has obtained possession of the house by no other method of right than good, strong, sonorous lying. Their story is as follows. About the year A.D. 1291 the house of the Virgin at Nazareth had fallen into decay, as may have been expected of a village carpenter's cottage at the end of a thousand years. To save it from utter

loss it was removed in the year named. The removal was effected by angels and the means of transport was the air. The flying house was first of all dropped, as it were, on the coast of Dalmatia, between Fiume and Tersato. It seems to have remained there unclaimed for three years, at the expiration of which period it was again removed by angels, the air being once more the medium of transport and the carriage being accomplished during the darkness of the night. On this occasion the much-travelled building alighted in a field near Recanati, on the property of a widow of the name of Laureta. This lady seems to have appreciated the value of the stone building which had reached her after the manner of an airship, so that in due course a church was erected over the winged house, and around the church sprang the town of Loreto. The town is still there, being possessed of a railway station and hotels, and of cabmen with whom, Baedeker says, it is necessary to bargain beforehand. It is also 'infested by beggars and impertunate guides.' The church is still extant and the Casa Santa remains in excellent preservation. The matter, therefore, is beyond discussion, while the monks at Nazareth have to do as well as they can with a disused water tank with a hole in it.

Although the visitor to Nazareth will view the carpenters' shops in the town with interest, he will probably decline to visit the site of the workshop of Joseph, or the synagogue in which Christ is said to have preached, and will refuse to look upon the block of hard chalk, eleven and a half feet long by nine and a half broad, which formed the table on which Christ dined with His



MARK'S WELL AT NAZARETH

disciples both before and after the Resurrection. The honest pilgrim is indeed exposed to severe tests in Nazareth. Of greater interest than these ridiculous objects is a cutler's shop, where men are making gardeners' knives as they have made them for centuries. These archaic instruments are like primitive razors. With them men still prune vines, cut grass, and gather fruit. There is reason to believe that this knife has changed but little, either in its outlines or in the manner of its making, since the days of Christ.

Everyone who comes to Nazareth will visit Mary's Well. It is reached by wading through the filth of a nauseating suburb. As it is the only spring in the town it can claim, with some assurance, to be the stream at which Mary must have many a time filled her pitcher with water while she held by the hand the Child Jesus. The structure which surmounts the conduit is quite modern. The water issues through stone gullies in two streams. At Mary's Well the inhabitants wash their vegetables as well as their feet, they water their cattle, and at the same time carry out intimate toilet operations in the public eye. The women come hither to draw water, bringing with them ancient olive-shaped jars, or picturesque pitchers, as well as modern bedroom jugs with florid patterns, and discarded biscuit tins with labels in English still adhering to them. The surroundings of the place are damp and sloppy, while the women at the well are not out of keeping with their environment. One guide-book, in an account of Nazareth, says 'many pretty female figures are to be seen' in the town. On the occasion of our visit these

females had to a soul kept strictly to the privacy of their homes and had avoided the well as if its waters were poisonous to beauty. The only girl at the fount who had any claim to even local charm was marred as to her appearance by the fact that her bare legs rose out of exceptionally large police boots.

Before leaving the Victorious City I experienced one vivid revelation of Nazareth as it was when Joseph and Mary dwelt there with the Child. Some hours before sunrise I looked out over the town. It was a night of stars and yet so dark was it in the hollow of the hill that no building, large or small, could be deciphered. There was enough shaping of the shadows to indicate that a silent town lay there at the end of the dale, but of church, convent, or cottage, minaret, or spire, there was never a manifestation. Against the faint light in the sky the summit of the surrounding hill was visible, clear cut as jet on dull silver, but without a house to mar the tracing of peak and dell that had been familiar to every Nazarene for twenty centuries and more. There was the town, and there, against the starlight, was the ridge above the town. Just as I saw it all so would it have appeared two thousand years ago, in the days when the story began. In a while the silence was broken by the crowing of a cock. A little later two donkeys pattered by along the road that leads to the south. Just such a sound as this must have stirred the dawn and have roused the ear of the sleeper when Joseph and Mary went down to Jerusalem with the Child.

XXII

FROM NAZARETH TO THE SEA OF GALILEE

THE journey by carriage from Nazareth to Tiberias is said to occupy 'about five hours.' We left Nazareth at 8 A.M., but, although our vehicle was light and our horses three, we did not reach Tiberias until nearly 4 P.M. This discrepancy in time may be explained by the circumstance that it rained for the most part of the way.

The road climbs the height at the back of Nazareth and then wanders for some time in and out among a waste of barren hills covered with stones. In the presence of a vicious rain egged on by an icy wind the prospect engendered what Shakespeare calls 'a villainous melancholy.' Looking backwards there is a fine, if hazy, view over the whole of Nazareth, while on the way Mount Tabor comes again into sight. This isolated, dome-shaped hill is over 1800 feet high. The dragoman endeavoured to cheer us by the announcement that the mount was on the frontier of Issachar and Zebulon, but it was too chilly to be stirred by information even of that kind. There was in ancient days a walled town on the summit of the hill. It possessed a great castle, a monastery, and no fewer

than three churches. It rose out of the plain as Mount St. Michael rises from the sea, an imposing height, crowned with battlements, towers, and spires. It is now a mass of ruins, but these ruins cover four square miles ; the castle is a heap of stones, while of the three churches there are only to be found inconsiderable remains.

In the next valley to Nazareth is a village of some proportions. It presents a disgusting medley of mud houses, fowls, goats, heaps of dirt, men, and manure, all huddled together in a dread potpourri of filth. As the place is of no Biblical interest there is neither church nor convent here, the spot being evidently regarded as outside the pale of mission work. For missionary enterprise in this country it is necessary that the 'field' should possess in the first place that most valuable advertising asset, a Bible name.

Among the hills a place reputed to be the ancient Gath-Hepher is pointed out. If the assumption of identity be true it was the birthplace of Jonah, and its dismal position may well account for the mental depression of that irritable and neurotic man.

In due course the road reaches a level plain scarcely to be distinguished from the others traversed on the way from the coast. It is treeless but green, while on either side of it are ranged commanding hills. The dragoman made a kindly effort to enliven us by stating that the hills facing us through the drifting rain belonged to Kadesh Naphtali, but the prospect was so dreary that we received the news without enthusiasm.

On elevated ground at the commencement of the plain is the village of Kafr Kenna, which is claimed by some to

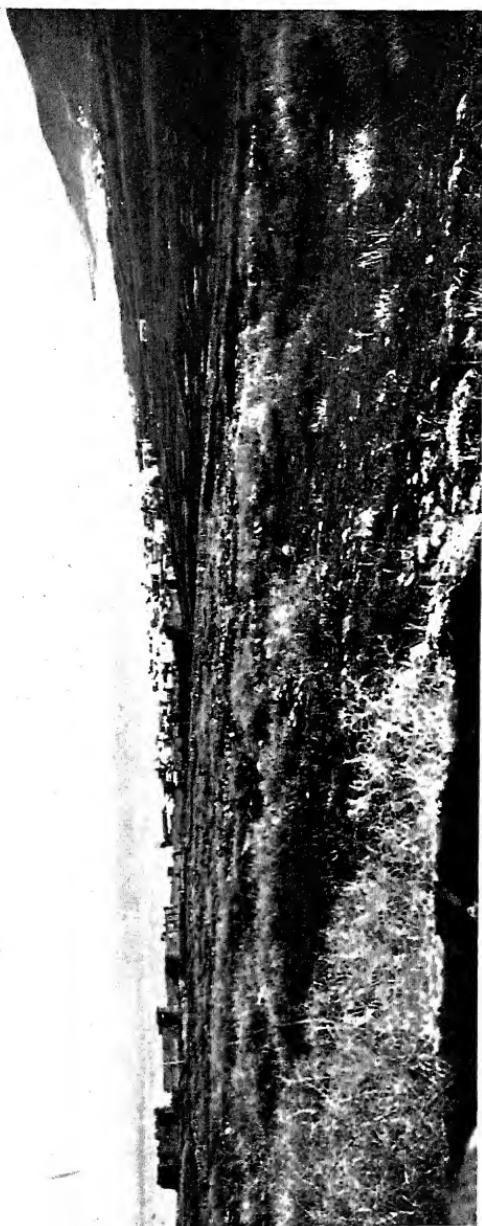
be identical with the Cana of the Bible. It forms an oasis in the flat, being situated in a thicket of olive trees, apricots, apples, and pomegranates. Just at the entrance of the village was an almond tree in blossom. Cana is a place of some 800 inhabitants who occupy a number of flat-topped, earth-coloured houses which are scattered about in disorder. There is a watering-place in the village where many lean kine and weary-looking donkeys were loitering aimlessly. A gaudy church, with a red roof and white walls, dominates the place, while about it are certain schools and a mission station. These buildings would appear to be greatly in excess of the spiritual needs of the settlement. We declined to alight from the carriage for the purpose of seeing in the church the actual water-pots of stone in which the water was turned into wine on the occasion of the marriage feast at Cana. For simple audacity this exhibition of the water-pots is not to be excelled, even in a country which, in the matter of deception, has dared much.

Not very far from this village the road ends, so that the rest of the journey to Tiberias is by way of a track, deep in mud, across the coffee-brown earth of the plain. It was impossible for the horses to proceed except at a walk, while many a time the mud was so deep as to reach the axles of the wheels. There is no question that the best vehicle upon which to travel along a Turkish road in the winter would be a plough with a seat attached to it. Nothing on wheels could be adapted to cut its way through the perniciously adhesive mud of this particular plain. With three seated ploughs and three horses we should have fared well and have reached the

lake in the allotted time. We lunched by the side of a mud-pond in a downpour of rain and in the full blast of a wind which might have just swept over a glacier.

As we neared the scene of the Sermon on the Mount the mud assumed a very malignant condition. For more than a mile it took upon itself the consistence of potter's clay. The spaces between the spokes of the wheels became rapidly filled up with this substance, so that each wheel was changed into a disc of solid earth about one foot in thickness. When this magnitude had been attained all progress became impossible, since the revolving mass of clay jammed against the side of the carriage and brought it to a standstill. It was then necessary for the driver to alight and, by means of his feet and his hands, aided by violent speech, to get rid of the encumbrance. Before many yards were traversed the wheels had grown to their previous size, so that the carriage seemed to be supported upon four enormous grinding-stones. The horses stopped, and the kicking of the driver's feet upon the spokes and the clawing of his hands at the same commenced once more.

We were at the time passing over some undulating downs so covered with stones that they might have rained from heaven. At the end of a shallow valley in these downs is a low hill with two peaks. The hill is said to be of volcanic origin and is known locally as the Horns of Hattin. Its sides are steep and grey, being covered, like the rest of the country, with stones. It is the only mound in sight. Its position is commanding and it is easy to understand that it has been selected—without authority in fact—as the Mount of the Beati-



DISTANT VIEW OF TIBERIAS AND SEA OF GALILEE

tudes. Although the Sea of Galilee is not yet visible from the track the Horns of Hattin can be seen from the surface of the lake. Here were uttered the words 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God'; and here in July 1187 was fought, by men who called themselves the children of God, one of the most desperate and bloody battles of the great Crusade. The Christian soldiers, although they carried high above their spears and bows a fragment of the true Cross, were cut to pieces to a man at the very foot of the mount from which had issued the words 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.'

In a while the Lake of Gennesaret comes into view. The traveller looks down upon it from the hilltop which commands Tiberias. By the time we had reached the spot where the descent begins the rain had ceased and a faint light from the declining sun lit up this wild mountain country. The surface of the lake, smooth as a mirror, was in tint a French grey, while the hills and cliffs upon the distant shore were a hazy blue. It was hard to tell the more rounded hills from the clouds. The place was spectral and mysterious. The earth appeared unsubstantial and the water as impalpable as a sheet of mist, so that one could imagine that the whole scene might fade as a mirage when the sun fell full upon it.

XXIII

THE SEA OF GALILEE

BEFORE going down to Tiberias we halted to view the lake at closer range. The Sea of Galilee lies in a valley between steep hills. This valley is open to the north and to the south. The lake is pear-shaped, being some thirteen miles in length and about six miles at its widest part. It is 680 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The Jordan enters the lake at its northernmost point and leaves at its southern extremity. The Sea of Galilee, viewed from a height, is picturesque to a certain degree, as must be any large collection of water among high hills. It could not, however, be said to be beautiful. The country around the lake is characterless, monotonous, and bare. It is a treeless country, grey with stone rather than green with grass. There is over all a sense of solitude and desolation. Once on a time the lake bustled with activity. Its waters were covered with galleys and sailing ships, and its beaches lined with fishing boats. Its quays were thronged with merchants, with officials, with wealthy idlers, with Roman centurions and their men. Along its shores were many large and prosperous towns. There was the town of Capernaum, conspicuous

by its government buildings and its garrison of Roman soldiers; while not far distant were the arrogant and pleasure-loving cities of Bethsaida and Chorazin. The lake would appear to have been as favourite a resort in Galilee as the Lake of Lucerne in Switzerland.

The shores of the Sea of Gennesaret are now abandoned. It is possible to follow the coast for miles without detecting a sign of life. Only one town remains out of them all—the half-ruinous and wholly dirty town of Tiberias. The sites even of the cities of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin are unknown. On the north border of the lake, where the hills are low, a patch of white on a slope leading to the sea marks the ruins of Tell Hum. In the opinion of some this stone-heap of Tell Hum might possibly mark the site of Capernaum, where Christ frequently dwelt, and which was spoken of as 'his own city.' Of this place He said, 'And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell'; and if hell be nothingness the prophecy has been bitterly realised. As for Bethsaida and Chorazin the woe foretold of them has fallen heavily upon their laughter-echoing streets, for every trace of them has been swept from off the face of the earth.¹

In full view from the hilltop is the Plain of Gennesaret, still fertile and even luxuriant, but neglected and forsaken like the rest of the land that surrounds the sea. At the edge of the plain a few miserable hovels indicate the village of Mejdel, which is no other than the ancient

¹ A very admirable account of the Sea of Galilee and of the country which borders upon it is given in Dr. Ernest W. G. Masterman's *Studies in Galilee*. (Chicago, 1909.)

Magdala, where dwelt Mary Magdalene. It would seem as if all relics of the Bible story had been wafted away, and that with them had vanished the charm of the old, pleasant days when the lake was a place of delight. Nothing, indeed, serves to keep green the memory of bygone times but the flowers which still, on the return of spring, people the land. Although they are the direct descendants of those flowers of the field that served to illustrate the discourse of Christ, they now bloom in a solitude, with none to 'consider' them.

The lake, on nearer view, fails to exhibit any hitherto undiscovered charm. It is still a lonely stretch of water, as monotonous and unsympathetic in its environment as the basin of a reservoir. The water certainly is clear and of a delicate plumbago blue, but the beach is harsh, being made up of sharp stones and rocks which are a sorry substitute for the smooth beach of clean pebbles that encircles the Dead Sea. Walking along the shore northwards from Tiberias, at the close of the day when the light is most full of magic, we expected much but found little. We came upon the bleached skeletons of horses and donkeys that had apparently crept down to the water's edge to die. Furthermore we encountered, with these remains, considerable and fetid heaps of town refuse, horrible rags that had once clung to men, discarded oil tins, and broken crockery. It may seem a sanctified experience to walk in meditative mood by the Sea of Galilee in the still of the evening, but when one has to pick one's way among aggressive filth, and to hold a handkerchief to one's nose the while, even the enchanting story of the lake avails for little. There were certainly fishing boats

on the beach, such boats as Simon Peter may have used, but there was also a steam launch, built at Dartmouth in England, tearing by with much blowing of its whistle and much rattling of its screw. In the place of men 'washing their nets,' as St. Luke describes, there were men washing a tourist char-à-banc which had been drawn to the brink of the lake to be rid of its mud. One could but feel, over and over again, that if there be anything in names this sea has every claim to the title of the Dead Sea.

Tiberias, like many other objects in the East, looks its best from a distance. It appears then as a grey and white town within a wall and on the very edge of the sea. The wall is brown, is more or less ruinous, is crumbling feebly away in places, but is made gallant and bold in other parts by round towers of no mean girth. At the north end of the town is a considerable castle, belonging to the days of crossbows and catapults. There are, above the housetops, indications of dome, minaret, and palm. Indeed it is possible to conceive that people viewing Tiberias from the hill might think that they would like to live in this city by the lake for the rest of their days. They will not hold to that impression when once they have passed within its boundaries.

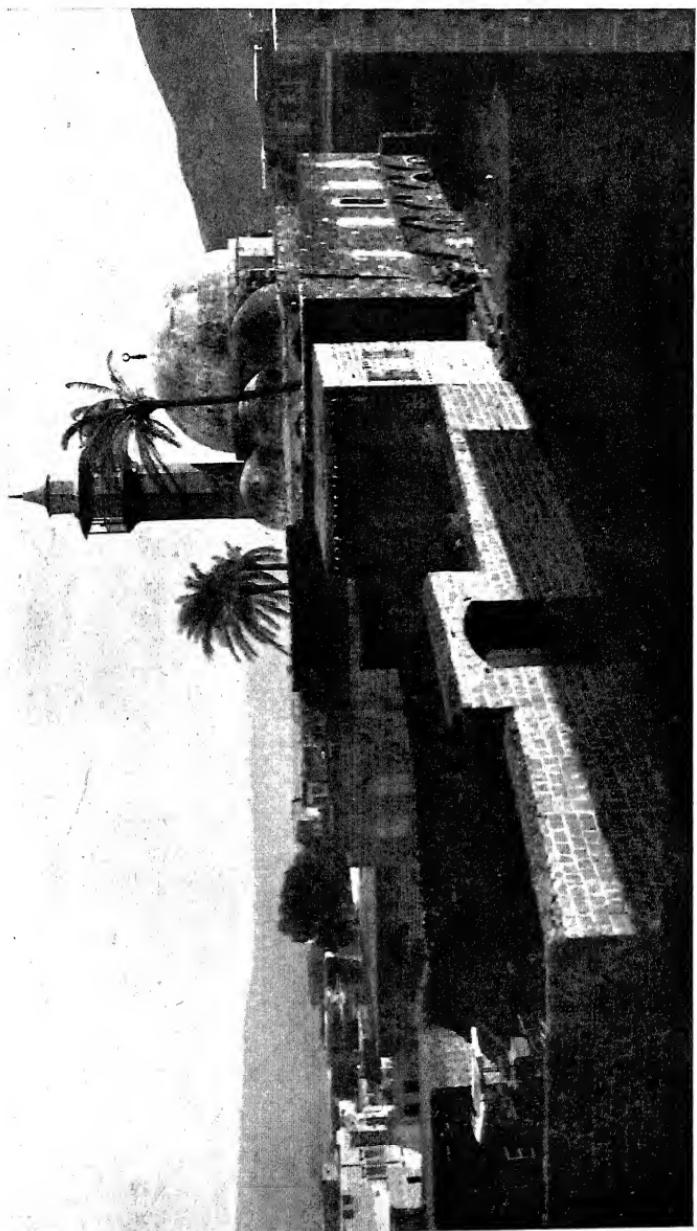
Tiberias was never a place of great repute. It was a Roman city founded in the year of our Lord 26. It must have been of some magnificence and beauty, for it was here that Herod built his golden house, and it was here also that the palace stood which was notable in that it was adorned with figures of animals.

The present town is made up of narrow paved streets

which are more or less liberally covered with filth, for Tiberias is famous for its dirt. The houses are uninteresting where not actually ugly. The bazaar is mean and squalid, while such little light as may penetrate into its stifling alleys is warded off by boards and by curtains of canvas or rags. It is, in short, a wretched and stinking place.

The 'Temple Dictionary of the Bible' states that 'in matters of cleanliness and sanitation the town is quite oriental.' This is a little severe on the Orient generally. The sanitation of Tiberias, being of the primordial kind, is worthy of some study, for it maintains in its integrity the hygiene of neolithic man. The thrifty housewife disposes of all offal, garbage, or general house refuse by throwing the same into the street. Practically all the streets slope towards the beach, so that when the rain comes the deposit is slowly slithered into the lake. As the water for household purposes is obtained from the lake there is established what is called a vicious circle, or rather a circular movement of germs from the house to the sea and back again. If there be no rain then there is the sun, which will dispose of the refuse by the uncompromising process of putrefaction.

I cannot say that the humbler citizens of Tiberias could be exhibited as proving the value of that system of hygiene which is 'quite oriental,' for some of them are the most sickly objects to be met with outside a hospital ward. The most dejected specimens are certain Jews who crawl about the city like peevish convalescents. Above their ringlets they wear large black hats or fur caps, while, as to their bodies, they are clad in dressing-gowns such as



TIBERIAS

would be worn by persons who had been invalids for a lifetime and had never attained to normal outdoor clothing. They are gowns that suggest a frowsy, much-hollowed armchair by a stale bedside. These people dressed as invalids look like invalids, being thin, limp, and grievously pale. Some of them might have been hidden from the light of day for months in dungeons or in lazaret houses.

Such is Tiberias, the sickly city, which exists to prove that mere stench is not fatal and that the persistence of human life is not incompatible with sturdy vermin and the lack of every observance of hygiene.

XXIV

THE ASCENT TO DAMASCUS

TIBERIAS is not a place to linger at ; even a passionate sanitary inspector would find it pall in time ; so we resolved to leave it with as much speed as the dragoman would sanction. One rash person at the hotel had said that if we stayed at Tiberias a little while we should find the place grow upon us. I realised even in our brief experience that it *was* growing upon us—as mould grows on a damp wall. We took our leave of the imperial city at 6.40 in the morning, while it was yet dark, and made our way to the boat through an earnest and self-assertive rain. The route to the quay is by a narrow paved street which was, for the moment, converted into a rivulet, the waters of which babbled over our feet as we walked. Its sickly eddies carried seawards the refuse of the night in the form of horrible *rouleaux* made up of fish entrails, rags, eggshells, vegetable garbage, paper, and a kind of fibrous dirt. The same *mélange* formed in places islands or little dams of filth, and in other spots left raised beaches of stratified corruption.

We ultimately reached the steam launch from Dartmouth and crawled beneath the arched roof of rough

wood. A long sojourn on the Sea of Galilee, combined with many local repairs, has given the boat quite an oriental appearance. There were other English travellers escaping from the city at the same time, but it was too dark at first to make out their characteristics. It was interesting, as the light grew, to watch their features gradually take form and individuality, for up to a certain period they were merely human beings with a grievance, the grievance being Tiberias. It was like watching the gradual appearance of the image in a photographic plate during the process of development. We passed on the voyage the Baths of Tiberias and noticed that they were ostentatiously deserted, for Tiberias has not yet the making of a popular spa and health resort. The water of the baths is hot, and, according to the guide-book, is 'much extolled as a cure for cutaneous diseases.' If this be so, subjects for the cure should not be far to seek.

The southern end of the lake takes the form of a low bank of clay of the colour of fire-brick. Through an insignificant gap in this bank, fringed with reeds, the Jordan sneaks out into the plain. A more commonplace or less dramatic exit it would be impossible to imagine. It compares meanly with the heroic leap of the impetuous Nile as it bursts with a roar from the Victoria Nyanza on its long journey to the sea. The launch proved itself worthy of its maker on the Dart, for a fair breeze was blowing. The pilot was a half-naked man, clad in a turban and an English oilskin coat, who steered the boat with his bare foot. He would have been quite a personage at a West of England regatta.

The landing is at the south end of the lake, at a place called Semakh. We were put ashore at a pier, and then reached the railway station by ascending a slope of mud as slippery as a bank of ice. The ascent would have been almost impossible but for a stream of rain-water which happily poured down the centre of the chute. By walking carefully in the water—a proceeding for which our experience at Tiberias had admirably fitted us—we all managed to gain a plateau where the mud was agreeably tenacious.

The railway journey from Semakh to Damascus is only 123 miles, but it occupies a day. There is but a single line of rails, the officials hold a spirited conversazione at every station, and the journey is all the way up-hill. Semakh is 610 feet below the sea-level, while Damascus is 2266 feet above it, so that a climb of 2876 feet has to be effected. This ascent is commenced almost at once, for the train, beyond Semakh, reaches promptly the steep sides of the hills which lie to the east of the Jordan.

This part of the journey is picturesque as is the course of any mountain railway among precipitous heights. The train follows for many miles the intricate valley of the Yarmuk. This river is a tributary of the Jordan, and its khaki-coloured waters were at the moment swollen with the recent rains. The line winds in and out among the maze of hills, rising ever higher and higher, passing through wild gorges and through black ravines, creeping along a ledge cut half-way up the side of a precipice, plunging into a valley of trees, or skirting a glade of luxuriant pasture. Many caves in the rock are

passed, and many a waterfall. The road turns upon itself more than once, so that it is possible, from a greater height, to look down upon the rails that have been already traversed. The river changes in due course from a huge masterful torrent to a mere hesitating mountain stream.

The hills are lofty, grey-green, wild, and very bare. There are few signs of human occupation to be seen. On one pale slope may be dotted a number of black goats, like flies on a sunny wall. In one picturesque dell, close to the stream and at the foot of a terrific cliff, we came upon a Bedouin camp made up of black tents. These piratical-looking tents are fashioned of hair cloth, woven by the women, and are identical, probably in every particular, with those tents of ancient days—the comely tents of Kedar. Around the tents are the flocks and herds and the untidy and intimate paraphernalia of a camp. Once we happened on a solitary man climbing the smooth side of a hill among this wilderness of hills. He looked so lonely that he might have represented the last man left upon the earth at the Last Day. There were no signs of any roads, but here and there we passed a narrow toilsome path, made by the tramping of human feet and ever striving towards the summit.

We were full of speculation as to what strange sight the summit would present. After plodding upwards, at a snail's pace, for hours we almost expected—in the manner of *Jack of the Beanstalk*—to find ourselves in a new country. As a matter of fact, when the top of the height was gained we did come into a strange country—into the remarkable land of the Hauran, the ancient

land of Bashan of the tribe of Manasseh. This Hauran is a great raised plateau or tableland reared heavenwards between the Jordan and the Waters of Merom in the west and the vast desert of Arabia on the east. It lies south of Mount Hermon and of the land of the Geshurites. Bashan was famous for its forests of great oaks and for its strong bulls. Everything in Bashan was upon a large scale. The king of the country at one time was Og. He was the last of the giants, but nevertheless the Israelites 'smote him until none was left to him remaining.' He was a sovereign who was notable for the fact that he possessed an iron bedstead. This bedstead was nine cubits long, from which it may be gathered—if the cubit be taken at eighteen inches—that Og was over twelve feet in height. The bedstead was at one time 'in Rabbath of the children of Ammon,' and it is a remarkable circumstance that it is not shown to the tourist of the day. This is the only grave oversight of the kind I noted in the Holy Land.

The tableland is a dead brown flat, boundless, treeless, and featureless. It extends all the way to Damascus, a monotonous desert of chocolate mud. In some places the mud is thickly covered with stones; in other places there are no stones. This agreeable variation provides the only relief in the scene. The traveller, after gazing out of the window at ten square miles of level mud on one side and the same amount on the other, sleeps for an hour, or reads for an hour, and then looks forth again to see still the desert of mud stretching away to the horizon. The Hauran is, I should imagine, unique in its power of presenting the fullest realisation of boredom.

In the days of King Og of the iron bedstead this plateau was covered with habitations, with no less than three-score cities, and the same, moreover, were cities 'fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many.' During the present journey we passed, at very rare intervals, a dejected village made up of square blocks of brown earth. Around certain of these villages was a high wall, built for no apparent purpose other than to keep out the surrounding mud. It can hardly be supposed that anyone would wish to enter one of these cities of the plain, or still less to take it by assault. It was a curious fact that these settlements of men were placed, for the most part, far from the railway—as if the inhabitants wished to enjoy the mud in selfish peace—and that very few specimens of the mud-dwellers themselves were ever to be seen.

We stopped at certain stations without evident object, for from the majority of them no trace of human habitation could be perceived. It would seem as if the railway builders, when strained to the utmost by accumulative boredom, had sought relief in the dissipation of erecting a station. A station consists of an unhappy block house of stone, a water tank, and miscellaneous railway litter planted casually in the centre of a rust-coloured plain as bare as a sheet of iron. So far as I could judge the present purpose of these stations is to give to the officials on the train an opportunity of speech with their fellow-men. I saw no other business transacted, while the appearance of a passenger—an event that we were happily spared—would have produced almost a panic.

An exception must be made of Derat, a town of 4000

inhabitants, forty-seven miles from Semakh, where there was what the Americans would call 'quite a station,' and not only a station but a very excellent refreshment room and even passengers. Derat is the ancient Edrei where the unfortunate King Og—his iron bedstead notwithstanding—sustained his final and most disastrous defeat. It presents a somewhat rare assortment of 'sights,' viz. a reservoir, the ruins of a Roman bath, subterranean dwellings described as 'labyrinthine,' an inaccessible mausoleum, and a hall for prayer. Derat is, moreover, the junction for Mecca, and it may be assumed that as each train arrives the porters call out in Arabic: 'Change here for Mecca.' Not far from it is another station of note named El-Muzeirib, where the pilgrim caravan halts for several days both in going to and in returning from Mecca.

In justice to the Hauran it should be said that it poured with rain during the many hours we spent in traversing the plateau, so that what was mud may under happier circumstances be good brown earth. Moreover this very earth is so exceedingly fertile that the entire tableland is a great grain-producing district. At the time of our crossing it was a ploughed field, levelled by the rain; but in a few weeks the corn would be breaking forth, and the monotony of brown would be changed for a monotony of green.

After what appeared to be days of crawling through a mud desert in the rain land was sighted to the left, in the form of low hills capped by a height covered with snow. We hailed this vision with so great delight that we might have been excused if we had exclaimed 'The land! The

land!' just as the ten thousand cried out 'The sea! The sea!' when, after their dreary march, they came within sight of the Euxine. The hills were the southern end of the Anti-Lebanon range and the snow peak was Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon has an altitude of 9380 feet. It presented on this occasion a singularly beautiful appearance, a dove-coloured peak with a summit of dazzling white—for the sun shone on the snow—standing up against a sky of unbroken grey. In its general outline it recalled the exquisite mountain of Fujiyama in Japan.

We reached Damascus at 7 P.M. The rain had ceased and the night was clear. Now Damascus is not only the largest city in Syria, but it is one of the great cities of the world, and is at the same time probably the most ancient of all existing towns. It has long outlived its contemporaries, Nineveh and Babylon, while its population is estimated at 200,000. One would feel assured that the traveller's arrival at Damascus, even at night, would be a notable matter, or at least a matter of which he would be conscious. One would expect a brilliantly illumined station with many offices, a platform crowded with porters, station officials, and awaiting friends, with outside a yard full of cabs, and beyond that the lights of a great city. It would be reasonable to imagine, for example, that the arrival at Damascus by train would be no less a circumstance than a like arrival at Constantinople or Cairo. As a matter of fact there are none of these things at Damascus, and the still greater anomaly exists that the voyager by train does not 'arrive' at Damascus, or, in other words, there is no evident

moment that marks—as it marks elsewhere—the act of arriving.

What happened in this city, where no man ‘arrives,’ was the following. The train, which had been crawling in the dark for seeming hours, slowed down and finally stopped. It had done the same thing many times before. I looked out of the window mechanically and saw nothing—saw less indeed than was apparent at some stations on the plateau. As I was proceeding to sink again into a state of torpor the dragoman appeared and announced that ‘this’ was Damascus. ‘This’ was merely the silent night and a lagoon of mud. Into the lagoon we stepped, and as the mud poured icily over the tops of my shoes I perceived rails projecting above the flood, which showed that we were on a railway and not in a lake. There was no trace of any town, nor was there a vestige of any station, nor even a glimmer of a lamp, but by the light of a five-days-old moon it was possible to make out a clump of cabs and a few ragged men rising out of the waters. Attention was directed to this gathering by the fact that the men were screaming at one another with great intenseness, and had probably been so occupied for hours before the train arrived. We waded to a cab, the floor of which proved to be the nearest dry land, and proceeded to drive into the night.

We were told that the drive to the hotel would occupy one hour, and the estimate proved to be true. In time we came to a town, to tram lines, to electric lamps raised aloft upon rough poles, to a street full of silent shops barricaded with odd fragments of wood and generally hung about with rags. This was a suburb of Damascus

called El Meidan, a suburb in tatters, containing many men and much mud.

On reaching the hotel we found it closed and apparently vacated. The household being, however, merely unconscious, had need to be aroused. Our telegram had not arrived, so we were not expected. This experience, together with others, revealed the fact that although there are telegraph offices in Palestine, where telegrams may be received and paid for, it is not to be inferred that any subsequent phenomena will develop. The fact that a telegram is left at a telegraph office does not imply that the message will ever leave the office, or, if dispatched, will ever arrive elsewhere. On this particular occasion our telegram did arrive, but not until we had been in Damascus two days. We found ourselves the sole guests in a very spacious hotel, which same proved to be the most comfortable of any we had happened upon in the present journeying.

XXV

THE CITY FROM THE HILL

THE city of Damascus is in many ways wonderful, in certain ways unique. It occupies a green oasis, level as a lawn, in one of the desert places of the earth. To the north of it rise the destitute hills of the Anti-Lebanon ; to the east stretches the Syrian desert ; to the west is the bald range of Mount Hermon ; while on the south are the unprofitable slopes that lead up to the plateau of the Hauran. To a migratory bird it would appear as a green pool in the midst of a miserable waste.

There are those who claim that Damascus is the oldest city in the world, the one 'abiding city' whose fitful story can be traced through all known ages into the shadowy immeasurable past. When Rome was new Damascus was already old ; when the foundations of London were being laid by the Walbrook and on Tower Hill Damascus was a venerable city, weighed down by years, but still bustling and prosperous. It was to Hobah, 'which is on the left hand of Damascus,' that Abraham pursued the bandits who had seized his nephew Lot, a citizen of Sodom, together with his goods. This record shows that even in the days of Chedorlaomer the king

of Elam, of Tidal king of nations, and of Arioch king of Ellasar, Damascus was a landmark of some note. Moreover, when David slew no less than twenty-two thousand Syrians of Damascus who had come to the succour of Hadadezer king of Zobah the place must have been a stronghold of solid proportions, for a garrison of over twenty thousand men can hail from no mean city. David is reputed to have reigned between the years 1032 and 992 B.C., yet even so far back as 1501 B.C. Damascus finds a place in the historical records of Egypt. Certain is it that Damascus was a centre of enlightenment and of bold affairs at a time when the island of Great Britain was a damp jungle in which a few mop-headed savages prowled about armed with flints.

The city no doubt has had its evil days, its visitations of war, pestilence, and fire, but it would appear to have never been for long cast down. One can believe that it must have possessed some fountain of eternal youth that bubbled in its midst, so that the throng in its streets never lessened, nor was the voice of joy and contentment ever hushed in the gardens without its walls. However crushing may have been the disaster that befell it, Damascus soon sprang again into the sun, cheery and radiant, just as a gorse down, after it has been swept by fire, becomes only the greener in the summer that follows on. Damascus would seem, throughout the whole of its history, to have been great and prosperous, and it is great and prosperous still. It was some time ago foretold that this purely oriental and arrogantly conservative city would languish into nothingness upon the advance of modern science and modern methods of manufacture

and of commerce, but the town of to-day shows no signs but those of vigour, solid comfort, and self-satisfaction. Even the blight of Turkish rule has failed to dim the brightness of its people or the vivacity of its marts.

Damascus in the past, the records say, was attacked by every known power in the ancient world, from the cultured Romans and the Franks to the savage hordes of Mongols under Timur. The city has been raided by the Egyptians and the Assyrians, by the Arabs and the Armenians, by the Persians, the Greeks, and the Turks, while even the Crusaders at one period made a half-hearted assault upon the Immortal City which came to nothing. It follows that Damascus has had many masters, but whether the city was, for the time being, Roman or Egyptian, Persian or Arab, it seems to have ever preserved, its indestructible personality.

This perennial freshness, this power of remaining unchanged in a changing world, have depended upon many things. In the first place this Damascus in the desert possesses a treasure which is inexhaustible and which is to be found in no place nigh unto it. This treasure is a garden with a circuit of many miles, where drought is unknown and where the luxuriant soil can produce all that is wanted for the immediate needs of man, for 'out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.' The rivers that water the garden may have come out of Eden and may have encompassed that land of Havilah 'where there is gold.' 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' asked Naaman the leper; and the answer

is they are better than them all, for they have made of the place 'a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters.'

More than this, Damascus stood like a vast caravan-serai at the cross roads of the ancient world. It stood in the way that was traversed in the great migration of the human race, when men moved from the East westwards, when the spirit of wandering and of adventure led eager hordes to pass, like a swarm of bees, from some thronged and restless hive in the depths of Asia into the empty, silent lands of Europe. Damascus was planted upon the highway that reached from Nineveh and Babylon on the east to that great sea in the west whose waters spread beyond the limits of the known world. It stood in the way, too, of that road that came up from the south, from the lands of ancient Egypt and the wastes of Arabia, to press northwards in search of new worlds and fresh enterprise. Through the streets of Damascus, through the street which is called Straight, came, with jingling bells and brilliant burdens, the camel caravans from the Tigris and the Euphrates and the lands beyond. Up to Damascus tramped rugged seamen from the coast of Phoenicia, men whose boats lay rocking in the harbours of Tyre and Sidon, bringing with them skins and strange metals and tales of lands and of people stranger still. It was in Damascus that the men of the sea, who had looked upon the white cliffs of England, bartered, by signs and gestures, with the men of the desert who had passed through the land of Assyria and could tell of the wide, mysterious world that stretched beyond the rivers towards the rising sun. Thus Damascus stood at the spot

where the two great highways met along which passed the commerce and the armies of the ancient world.

Damascus is said still to be the most oriental of all great cities of the present day, the city the least changed, the most in communion with the affairs and the peoples of the past, and the best fitted for any conception of the romance of the East. The reason for this is not far to seek. Damascus is still a great market of exchange between the East and the West. Side by side in one shop may be found the latest American safety razor and a specimen of Persian metal work five centuries old. You may buy in the town a cotton print of convulsive pattern that left the steam factory in Manchester but a few weeks ago, or a praying carpet, so faint in tints as to be almost a shadow, that was knelt on by some devout Moslem when Crusaders were harrying the land. From Damascus still leads the caravan route across the desert to Bagdad and the Persian Gulf. Wild men and their ragged camels stalk through the bazaars of the city who have come from Kurdistan, from the Zagros Mountains and even from the Caspian Sea. It is from Damascus that the famous pilgrim road to Mecca starts on its long journey to the holy south. It is from Damascus that the traveller must set out who would go to Palmyra, to the wonderful Street of Columns, and to that great temple of the sun which was dedicated to Baal.

It is possible in Damascus to alight from an electric tramcar for the purpose of seeing the camels unload in the great Khan, camels that have forded the Euphrates and have been on the journey as many weeks as a steamer

would take days to go from England to the Cape of Good Hope and back. Here can be seen the solemn merchant sitting cross-legged at the receipt of custom, duly robed and turbaned, the scribe busy at the corner of the street, the water-carrier with his dripping goat-skin, and the story-teller entrancing a group of idlers by the gate. Here can be heard the call of the muezzin from the mosque, the hubbub around so little a bargain as the selling of two sparrows for a farthing, and the hammer of a man who, in his garb, aspect, and methods, differs in no essential from that Alexander the coppersmith who did much evil.

At the north-west corner of Damascus the hills come close to the city, so close indeed that the precipice of Jebel Kasyun actually overhangs the town. This mass of bleak stone, 3700 feet in height, is notable in the beauty of its colouring, in its tints of yellow and brown, the yellow being drifts of sand, the brown being masses of outstanding rock. The hill is a hill of great fascination when viewed, with the sunlight upon it, against a back-ground of blue sky. It is bare of any trace of life, of even a weed or a blade of grass. It might indeed be a mountain of iron dusted with a chocolate-coloured rust, while its very grimness, dryness, and barrenness contrast vividly with the rose-loving, fountain-splashing city at its foot. The best view of Damascus—the one supreme view—is to be obtained from Jebel Kasyun, either just above the suburb of Es Salehiyeh, or from a point higher still—such as the ruined Dome of Victory or the Tomb of the Seven Sleeping Brothers. It is one of the never-to-be-forgotten prospects that the world provides. From my own experience I would say that there is no view of

a city from a height to be compared with it. The prospect of Cairo from the citadel, or of Florence from the Torre al Gallo, are charming enough, but they cannot approach to the wonder of the view over Damascus from the tomb where the brothers sleep.

At the bottom of the hill the plain stretches straight away to the horizon, where it is lost in a blue haze as if in a vast lagoon. On either side of the plain, but many miles away, are low, purple hills which run parallel to one another until they too are lost in the far mists. Within these delectable boundaries lies a garden of trees that, from the mountain, looks like a well-trimmed wood, but it is a wood of orange trees and poplars, of walnut trees and roses, of plum trees and pomegranates, of apricots and almonds, of shady walks, of pergolas, of vineyards and reedy pools. There is no garden comparable with it, for it extends towards the south and the east for no less than nine miles, while buried among its shadows are over one hundred villages.

In the midst of this garden is the city, a brilliant sand-coloured plaque inlaid in green, just as a piece of ivory is inlaid in the lid of a Damascene casket or as a bright pebble is embedded in a mat of moss. The outline of the city is sharply cut. It has the shape of a hand mirror, the handle being the narrow, long extended suburb of El Meidan. The general colour of the city, as it gleams in the sun, is a bright, yellowish brown, but it is mottled with white, with grey, and with faint blue. In the matter of tint it is most fitting to be compared with a sand dune covered with seagulls and hidden in a green thicket. There are details in this bright splash of colour

which are only perceived when the first shock of admiration has passed away—the details of minarets and towers, of cupolas and domes, together with flat roofs at varying levels to the number of many thousands.

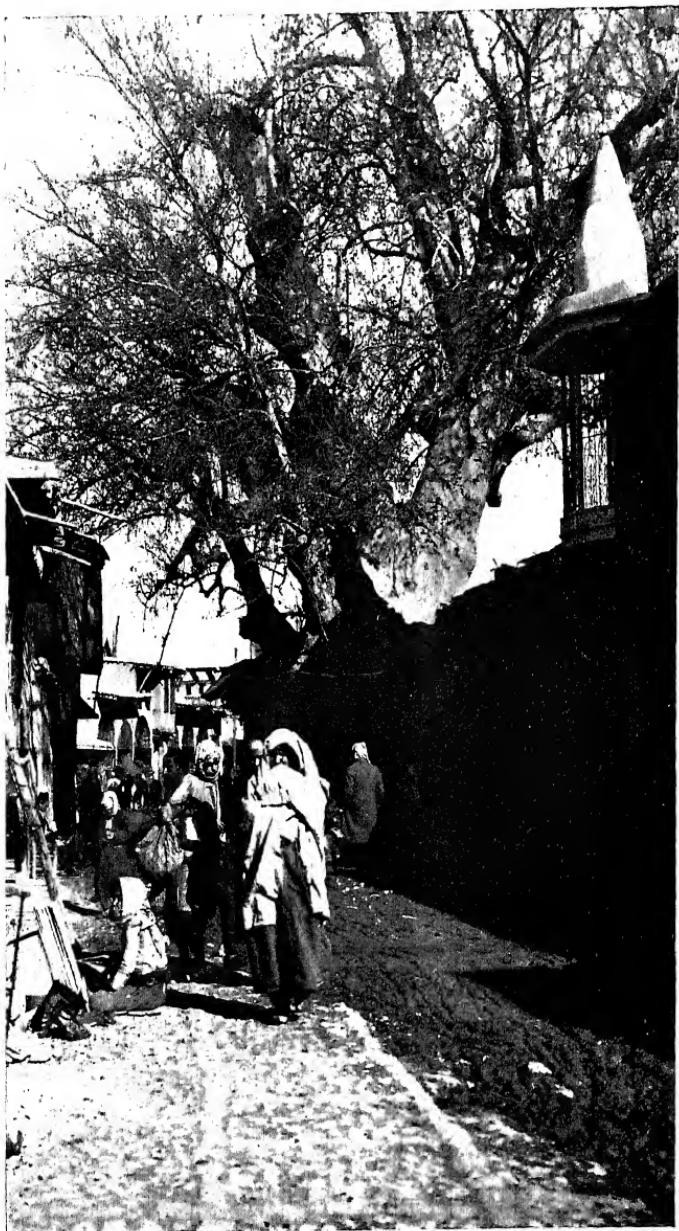
If it be realised that the expanse is immense, that the white minarets stand up against the blue of the lagoon of mist, and that beyond them all is a clear sky with woolpack clouds resting on the edge of the world, it will be understood that the view is one of amazing fascination.

It was at three o'clock in the afternoon that we saw the city from the hill, and at the moment when the magic of the scene was the most absorbing the cry of the muezzin rose like the song of a bird from the galleries of a score of mosques

XXVI

NAAMAN'S RIVER

DAMASCUS is large, and the crowd that throngs its endless streets is not only vast but infinitely varied. This was especially to be noted at the time of our visit, when pilgrims from Mecca were pouring into the city, day after day, to the number of thousands. Great and heterogeneous as is the crowd it is in good heart. Every one appears to be cheerful and to be quietly content. There is lacking that cloud of melancholy which hangs, like impending fate, over Jerusalem, and which fills its lanes with the abject, the purposeless, and the whining. The people of Damascus chatter like daws as they hurry about their business, while the slinking wretch who creeps silently along, hugging his empty stomach and his flapping rags, is rare to see. There are very few beggars in Damascus. One misses, too, with relief the rabble of hollow-eyed children, blue with the cold, who ever clamour for baksheesh, as well as that awful company of the maimed, the halt, and the blind who seem to have escaped alive from a morgue. Compared with Jerusalem there are more cafés in Damascus and less religion. The town may be the better or the worse for this, but it loses



ABRAHAM'S OAK, DAMASCUS

nothing in cheeriness nor in the outward signs of well-being. A city, as a human settlement, is to be gauged by its suburbs, and the suburbs of Damascus are good to linger in.

The streets are fairly wide, the passages in the bazaar are spacious. Slums there are, no doubt, but they do not obtrude themselves, while I came upon few of those fetid alley-ways where the sunless walls drip misery, and where the figure of a man groping for a mouldy door presents the most terrible picture of 'home' that the tale of humanity can provide. The sanitation in Damascus is no doubt 'oriental,' but the place is, by comparison, clean, and by 'appearance wholesome, while the filth and stenches of a town like Tiberias are unknown.

Then, again, the Damascene is a lover of trees. Wherever a tree can grow there will a tree be found, so that there are few open streets where a splash of green is not to be met with. The most remarkable tree in the city is a venerable plane or sycamore, called 'Abraham's oak.' It stands near the bazaar of the carpenters. Its age must be extreme, for its trunk is now a mere grey shell that looks like a tent with the door thrown open. Furthermore the Damascene is a lover of gardens, and thus it is that wherever there is space for a garden there a garden flourishes. It would be curious to happen upon a pergola covered with creepers in a corner of Lombard Street, or in a gap in the Rue des Petits Champs, yet such a spectacle is provided, over and over again, in the centre of the busiest quarter of Damascus. In some parts of the city, especially towards the walls, there is hardly a house, poor though it be, that has not, on its

flat roof, an arbour shaded by a spreading vine. The arbour-builder is the better for his work, and the children who play under the trellis gain a greater share of that peace which passeth all understanding than do the little urchins who build mud grottoes under the precipice of bricks that constitutes a modern industrial dwelling. Damascus, therefore, in spite of all recent developments elsewhere, is still pre-eminently the Garden City.

The vitality of the town, and indeed its very existence, depend upon the two famous rivers, the Abana and the Pharpar. The Pharpar comes to the plain from the range of Mount Hermon. It brings water to the more distant gardens, but has no concern with the city itself, being, in point of fact, some seven miles beyond the circuit of its walls. The Abana, or, as it is now called, the Barada, has its sources among the slopes of Anti-Lebanon. Above Damascus the river breaks up into some seven streams, two of which go direct to the city. It is in the north-west corner of the town, about the foot of Jebel Kasyun, that the Barada makes its entry into Damascus. It is a cheery stream, dancing along with all the impetuosity of youth. It keeps at first to a staid channel, beneath orderly bridges, but when it reaches the actual town—when it should be the most decorous—it suddenly dives underground and disappears.

From this point the river and its thousand streams play a mad frolic in the place, a gambol of hide and seek with all the merriness, the mischievousness, the elfishness of Puck. What tricks it perpetrates beneath the square where the camels wait I do not know, but it turns up again, bubbling with laughter, by the fruit

market, makes happy a garden or two, cheers a dull street, whispers music under a café wall, and then bolts out of sight beneath a sober house to begin its underground pranks once more. I spent a morning following this sprite of a river, this Robin Goodfellow of a stream, but was compelled to abandon the chase as too bewildering. It was impossible to believe that this frivolous, gossiping stream was the ancient Abana for which Naaman the Syrian had so reverent a regard, or that such a flibbertigibbet could be responsible for supplying electric power to the tramway company of Damascus.

The river breaks up in the town, as already said, into a tangle of streams which penetrate to every nook and corner of the city. You peep through the back door of a humble shop and there, beyond the stone courtyard, is the stream. In a gap in a street you hear the splashing of water, and behold, over a parapet is the madcap river welling up from under the road. Its waters eddy through a hundred gardens, drop into a hundred pools, and splash the pigeons that come to drink at innumerable fountains.

Just outside the town the Barada emerges as a somewhat meek little stream, shorn of its blithesomeness, slower of foot, and so sobered as to be wellnigh silent. It is no longer impetuous ; it no longer rollicks along ; it has been sullied by the city ; its waters have become dull. The Abana is middle-aged, disillusioned, and tired of the world.

The end of the once joyous river is very sad. It wanders listlessly among the orchards and the fields. Plum blossoms and rose petals fall unheeded upon its

sallow surface. The merry life has come to a close, and the happy company that danced into the city is broken up. The weary stream never reaches the sea. It enters into a sullen and unsympathetic marsh. It hides its face in the mud, among the barren rushes, and in this Slough of Despond it dies.



THE RIVER ABANA : JUST BEYOND DAMASCUS

XXVII

THE STREETS OF THE 'ARABIAN NIGHTS' CITY

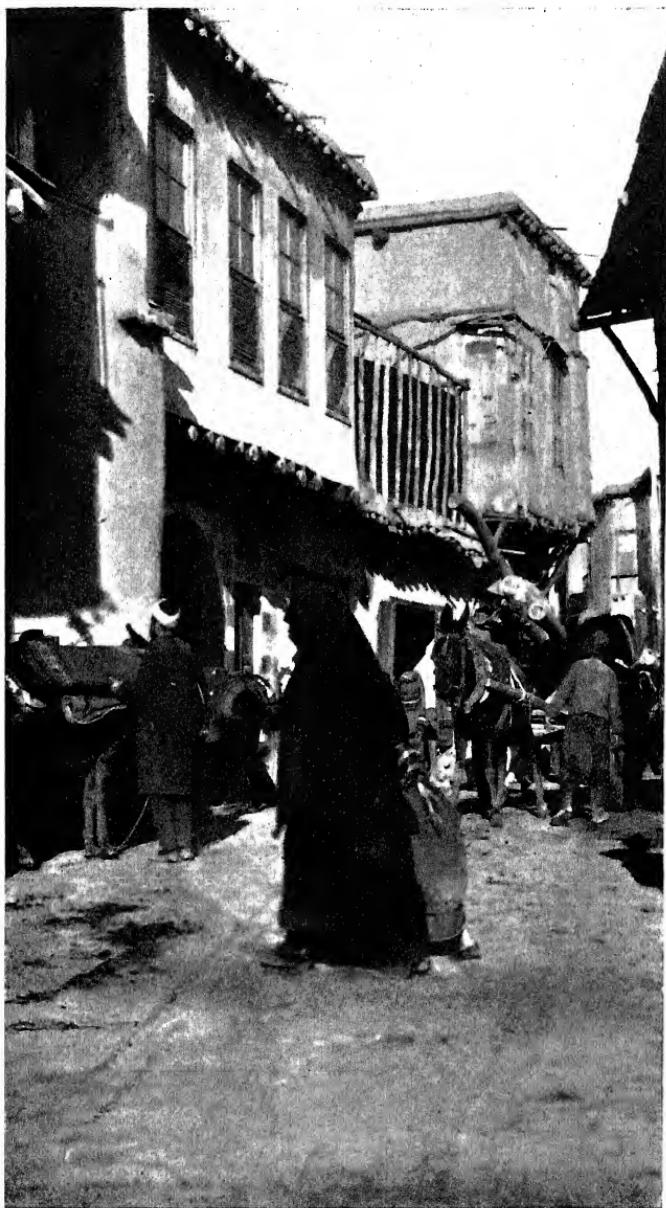
THE charm and interest of Damascus lie solely in its streets and in the people that fill them. With the exception of the Great Mosque there are no public buildings in the town of any especial concern. There are few sacred sites, spurious or otherwise, to visit. There are practically no antiquities to muse over, for Damascus has so little care for the past that within its walls 'there is no remembrance of former things.' It may disregard the past, but it lives in it. It belongs to the world as it was many centuries ago. In not a few particulars it has kept unchanged since the days of Christ. It carries the visitor back into mysterious ages—not as Egypt does, by means of monuments and symbols and things that have been buried with the dead, but by the pageant actually played by living human beings before the eyes of the onlooker.

Here are to be seen customs and modes of dress which are as old as history, details of living and processes of manufacture which appear to the traveller now just as they did to the visitor from Babylon. There are still looms at work in Damascus which differ but little from

those that kept deft, yellow fingers busy at the time when the caliphs reigned. There are shops which, with their particular goods, would be as familiar to the Damascene of four centuries ago as they are to the citizen of to-day.

Damascus is a city of magic in whose streets are presented the daily doings of a world which is but little nearer than is the world of dreams. It is a city that played an intimate part in the tales of the 'Thousand and one Nights.' Indeed, some of the strangest happenings that those nights record took place by the banks of the Abana. It is still the city of the ancient stories, for it has altered but little since the fair Shahrazad told the tales to the king. Here are the very streets she described, the very shops, the very people. It is possible to believe anything in Damascus. It is only necessary to walk through the lanes at night to acquire a faith in Jinns and Efrets and those other abrupt spirits who meddled in the affairs of men when the caliphs and their viziers strolled about disguised in search of adventure.

The principal streets of Damascus, as well as the chief bazaars, are wide enough for carriages to pass, while there are many narrow lanes of interest which can only be traversed on foot. There is that easy irregularity about the streets, and that perverse avoidance of all formality, which are characteristic of the East. No two adjacent houses are of the same height or style, nor do they show any disposition to stand in order. Some streets follow lines so unsteady that they may have had origin in the visions of a town-planner drugged with hashish.



A STREET IN DAMASCUS

The majority of the houses are built of wooden frames filled in with laths and pearl-grey plaster. On occasion the lower story may be of black stone and the upper parts of unbaked bricks, while some of the humbler dwellings are fabrics merely of mud and chopped straw.

Most picturesque in the residential quarters of the city are the narrow lanes whose roadways are trodden earth. Here are projecting windows propped up by sloping beams, projecting stories that nearly meet across the path, suspicious peep-holes in the wall, casements full of lattice-work, unexpected archways, as well as ancient doors studded with nails, and windows barred like a prison.

I am sure that in one of these lanes I came upon the house of that Jewish physician who had the awful experience with the dead hunchback whom he found propped up in his vestibule (as recorded in the Twenty-fourth Night), and who ran out into the street calling, 'O Ezra's ass ! O Heaven and the Ten Commandments ! O Aaron and Joshua the son of Nun ! ' ¹

There may be donkeys asleep in the lane, or fowls scratching about, or an artisan at work, squatting in the road with his back to a wall, while the path itself will be strewn with straw and husks, discarded oranges, and unintelligible litter. It is at night, when the moon is high, that these by-ways of the city are the most alluring and the most full of magic. Then do strange and beautiful things appear that were unnoticed in the day :

¹ This and subsequent quotations from the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* are from the excellent edition of Edward William Lane, in three volumes (London, 1912).

the black shadows of balcony railings on white walls, the unfathomable gloom of an entry, the moonlight on a veranda and its empty bench, the wonders of light and of shade on the roofs. It is such a scene as this that enables one to understand what is meant in the Bible by 'the precious things put forth by the moon.'

Many mosques are come upon, for there are some two hundred and forty-eight of these houses of prayer in Damascus. They are all picturesquely shabby, for it seems to be an ill thing to defile an ancient Moslem church by the process known in England as 'restoration.' Some are built of black and grey stone arranged in horizontal layers, and are of considerable dignity. Others are humbler, being made up of plaster and bricks, the bricks coming in evidence where the plaster has fallen into the street. To look for a second into the courtyard of a mosque is to gain a glimpse of such mystery, compounded of white pavements, arched passages, and slow-moving, hooded figures, as the spectator may wish to indulge in. In incongruous places are foreign-looking government buildings, very ill at ease, which might have been translated from a country town in France, as well as suburban villas, with red roofs and white-walled gardens, which would be more in place at Nice.

The houses of the rich in Damascus are very exuberant. Within the gate is a courtyard, open to the heavens, and paved with coloured stones. In the centre is a raised pool of marble with a fountain splashing in it, while arranged around the court are the living-rooms, just as in an ancient posting hotel in France. The walls

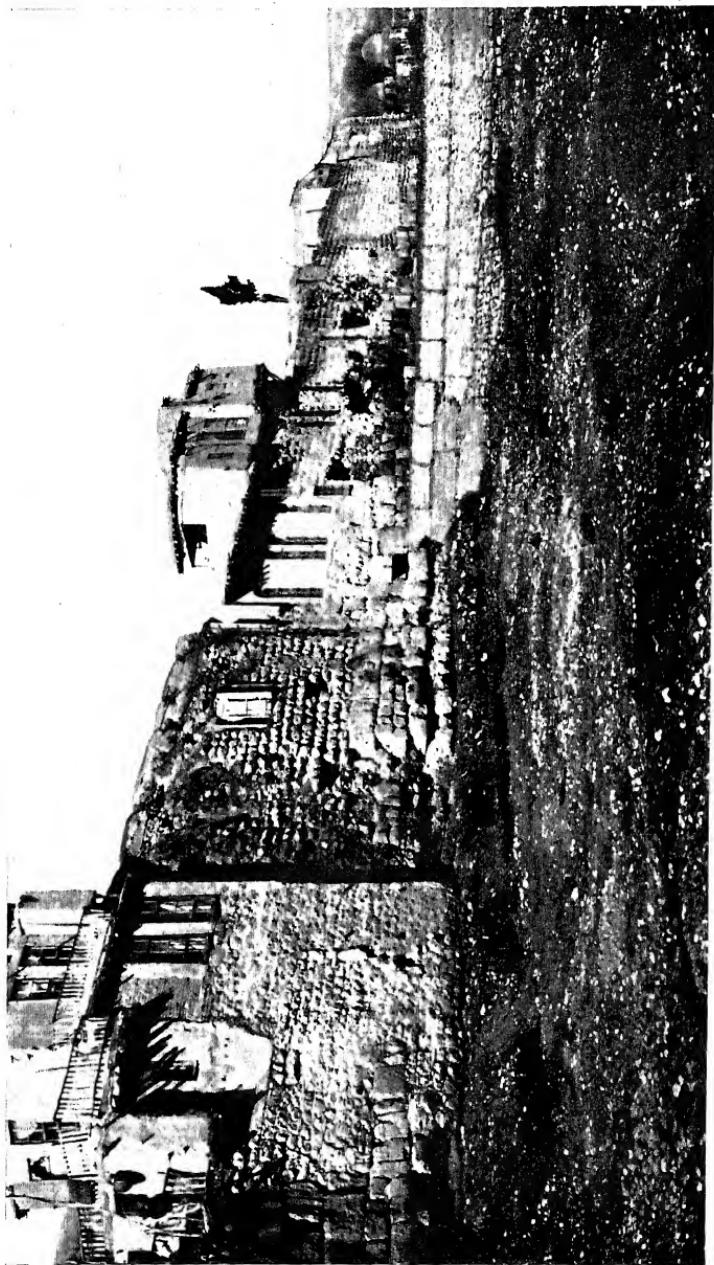
are gaudily painted or are covered with brilliant tiles. Flower beds have a place in the court, wherein are orange and lemon trees, pomegranates, and beautiful shrubs. There may be a colonnade with couches and cushions, or a wonderful recess tortured with decoration and arranged as a kind of bourgeois throne-room, the same corresponding to the 'best drawing-room' of the Western world. It aims—as does the best drawing-room—at expressing the owner's conception of luxuriance and style, for this is 'the saloon fitted up for his pleasure, that his bosom might expand in it.' It allows for such expansion, but it is, nevertheless, stiff and uncomfortable, and a little like an exhibitor's show-case.

Decoration in the principal apartment of the house itself is carried to such excess as to border on delirium. The walls seem to have been sprayed, from a dozen jets, with gold and silver as well as with every colour of the spectrum, and to have been worked up into headache-producing patterns as irritating as are the details of a silly puzzle. The windows of this room are filled with lines of such complexity as to suggest a dozen problems of Euclid thrown together to make a framework for the glass. The medley of mirrors and lamps, of rugs and pillows, of purposeless hangings, and of dazzling oddments in brass, ivory, inlaid wood, and silver, cause the room to be as full of discordant ornament as a parrot house is of noise. One might as well live in the tube of a gigantic kaleidoscope; yet this is the 'spacious saloon' of the 'Arabian Nights'—just such a saloon as that in which the lady of Bagdad entertained the porter; for that room, it may be remembered, was 'decorated with

various colours, and beautifully constructed with carved woodwork and fountains and benches of different kinds, and closets with curtains hanging before them. There was also in it, at the upper end, a couch of alabaster, inlaid with large pearls and jewels, with a mosquito curtain of red satin suspended over it.' It was in this apartment that the porter became intoxicated—a circumstance that could be condoned in any man of quiet tastes with a belief in the simplicity of the home.

There is an ancient wall encompassing the city. Although it presents many a breach, and is, on occasion, altogether lacking or lost, yet an interesting afternoon may be spent in following it as far as it can be traced. It is a shabby and ill-looking wall, old certainly, but too disreputable in appearance to be in any way venerable. The lower courses are Roman, being composed of well-cut stones of immense size. The middle part of the wall is Arabian and is made up of small irregular stones, from which the mortar has been eaten away as if by some process of ulceration. The upper part of the wall is Turkish and, like other things Turkish, is in a state of ruin. The wall is pierced in many places by odd, inconsequent windows which have the appearance of being greatly surprised to find themselves looking out upon the ditch.

It will be remembered that when St. Paul was in Damascus 'they watched the gates day and night to kill him,' and that, to circumvent the unpleasant-minded 'they,' 'the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.' It is needless to say that the lamb-like tourist, still sick from excessive lying, is



DAMASCUS : THE OLD CITY WALL

shown the actual window from which the agile apostle was lowered. The window may have an antiquity of twenty years. It is perched, moreover, on the top of the Turkish wall. Had the circumstance occurred in the Holy Land the basket also would be exhibited at a moderate charge.

Of the few remaining gates of the city the most picturesque is the East Gate. It was the gate from which the road led across the desert to Nineveh and Babylon. It was built by the Romans, and it can readily be seen that it consisted, at one time, of three arches, a large central entry, with a small archway on either side. The existing gate is represented by one of the smaller passages only.

There is shown to the believing in Damascus the house where 'a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias' lived. A narrow door in a lane leads to a paved courtyard in which is a garden. From this yard steps descend to a small subterranean chapel, dark, damp, ancient, and uninteresting. It contains a few benches, such as are used in infant schools, and an altar. In a mouldy recess the home of Ananias—who, like other holy folk, would appear to have been a cave-dweller—is pointed out by an unwilling dragoman who protests that he is not a party to the fraud.

As an antidote to the spurious house the traveller would do well to visit the very genuine hospital of the Edinburgh Medical Mission. It is situated beyond the walls, in a pleasant suburb which calls to mind the outskirts of Paris. Here, in a garden full of flowers, is a hospital which, without any regard to nationality or

creed, has carried out for long a most admirable and benevolent work under the direction of Dr. McKinnon, who has been resident in Damascus for over twenty years.

However little life in Damascus may have changed, the change in the hospitals of the district has been very complete, as may be gathered from the following account of the out-patient department of the Bagdad hospital in the days of the Prince of the Faithful, as set forth in the 'Arabian Nights.' It appears that a young man of good position known as Ghanim the son of Eiyoob, or the Distracted Slave of Love, fell into a state of poverty and ill-health. He was at last found leaning against the wall of a village mosque, in a condition of sickness and destitution too unpleasant to be detailed. The villagers took him in hand and applied first aid, following the same with certain domestic remedies. These preliminary measures were persevered in for the unreasonable period of one month. As Ghanim continued to get steadily worse under the treatment it was resolved that he should be sent to the Bagdad hospital for further advice. A camel-driver was found to whom the following instruction was given: 'Convey this sick person on the camel and, when thou hast arrived at Bagdad, put him down at the door of the hospital: *perhaps* he may recover his health, and thou wilt receive a recompense.' It was evident that the villagers had not a high estimate of the hospital, and that their expedient for getting rid of the sick Slave of Love was very extreme. The camel-driver held even a lower opinion of the institution, for when he had conveyed the helpless man to the hospital

he put him down on the doorstep and promptly departed. He was evidently convinced that a prospect of recompense depending upon the professional ability of the staff of the hospital was based on grounds so infinitely slight that he would not wait to see them materialise. He does not seem to have even knocked at the door. Anyhow, the out-patient department so precisely maintained its title that the sick man did actually lie outside the door all night and until the following morning.

By the morning the patient 'had become so emaciated that his form resembled that of a toothpick.' A crowd collected to look at this strangely shaped human being, and were continuing their observations when the sheik of the market arrived and drove the idlers away. In the meantime the hospital authorities had exhibited no interest in their solitary out-patient. Possibly the house-surgeon may have looked out of the window, may have muttered the word 'drunk,' and have returned to his breakfast. Now the sheik had an opinion of the hospital of his native town which was even lower than that of the camel-driver, for he said: 'I will gain Paradise by means of this poor person; for if they take him into the hospital they will kill him in one day.' It is only fair to the hospital to say that the staff had displayed no anxiety to admit the sufferer into what the sheik regarded as a lethal chamber. On the other hand the sheik's views as to the value of the charity saved the life of Ghanim the son of Eiyoob, for the sheik took him into his own home and told his wife to look after him. This excellent and most practical woman 'tucked up her sleeves and, having heated some water, washed

his hands and feet and body and clothed him in a vest of one of her female slaves.' The clothing provided for the sick man appears to have been a little scanty, but in spite of all things he made an excellent recovery.

XXVIII

THE BAZAARS

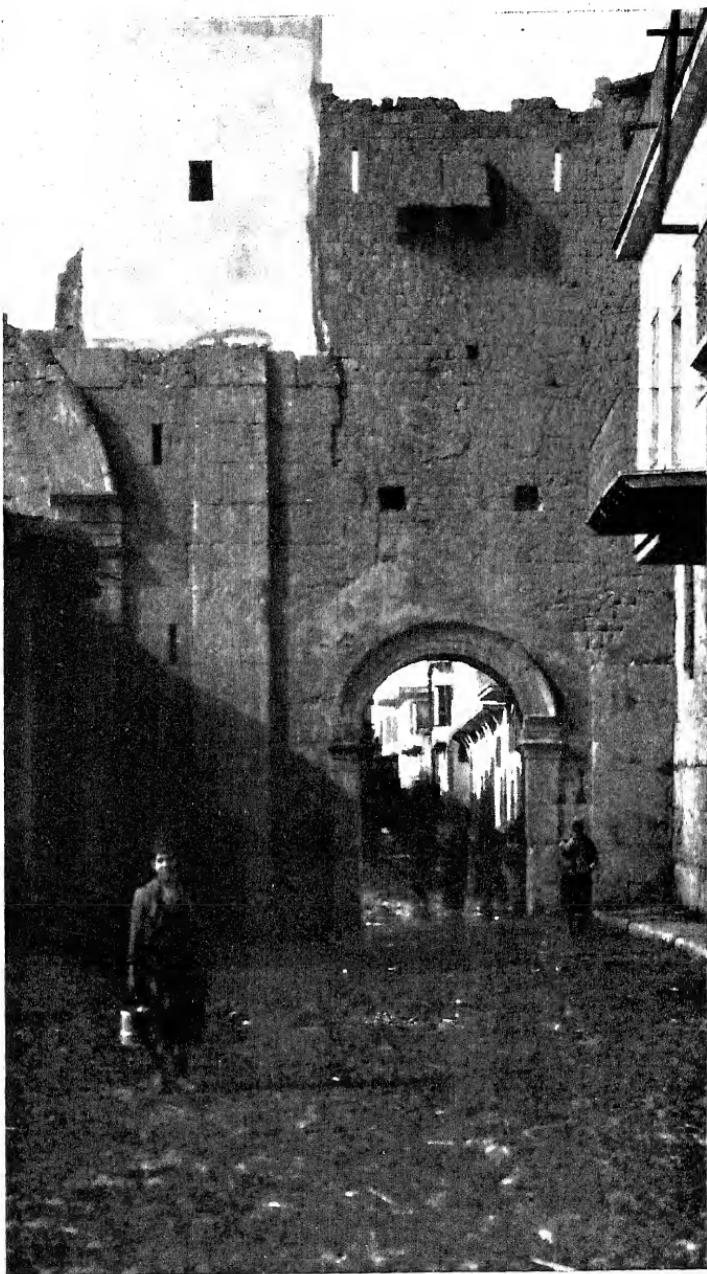
THE bazaars or shopping quarters of Damascus are of infinite variety and of manifold degree. There is the Bond Street of the city as well as the Houndsditch and the Lambeth Marsh. The bazaars are not made up of a mere medley of shops, but each is constituted by a collection of shops of a particular kind. It is as if Oxford Street in London were devoted solely to the sale of boots, Regent Street to saddlery, Holborn to hats, and the Strand to drugs and spices.

The bazaars in the city are, for the most part, covered-in passages, ranging from lofty and wide tunnels, on the one hand, to mere rag-shaded alleys on the other. Most of the bazaars are dark. To enter one from the glaring street is like passing from the open road into a wood. The larger bazaars, especially those in the construction of which much timber is used, suggest the hold of a great ship, where goods have been stored along both the port and the starboard sides, and where the deck above is arched instead of flat. Certain are roofed over by a long line of stone and plaster domes which thus form a ceiling of inverted cups. In the meaner kind the sky

is shut out by casual boards and tattered canvas or by fragments of mats, while in some the wooden roof is in such disrepair that it provides little more cover than a fishing-net.

There is a curious atmosphere in the bazaar, as if the air were tinged with brown. The sound of traffic also is strangely dulled, owing to the facts that the floor is of trodden earth, that many among the crowd are bare-footed, while the soft leather slipper is a thing of silence compared with the nailed boot on a pavement. The bazaar will be crowded from side to side and from end to end. Infinite sounds from human throats will fill it, as the hum of the sea fills a cavern, but beyond this is only a faint rustle—as of wind among rushes—the scuffle of human feet.

To form a conception of one of the larger bazaars let the Londoner imagine the Burlington Arcade a quarter of a mile long and three times its present height and width. Let it be as dimly lit as the nave of a City church in November, let the road be of foot-polished earth, and on either side imagine a row of coachhouses thrown open and stuffed with goods from floor to roof, with, above these recesses, the windows of a Bayswater mews or the iron fanlight of a booking-office. Conceive the arcade crammed with the company of an opera, based upon the 'Arabian Nights,' and that, strolling among the crowd, are a few camels and donkeys with an occasional Arab sheik on a horse. It would be strange to see in the Burlington Arcade a horseman buying a necktie at a shop door without dismounting, but the spectacle is common in Damascus. The light in the bazaar is derived



THE EAST GATE OF DAMASCUS

largely from flaws in the roof and from side alleys or cross streets, or possibly from dormer windows in the domes. It provides an appropriate atmosphere of mystery to the place. I am loath to add that some of the shops—not the shops which belong to the time of the Caliph Haroon Er-Rasheed—are lit with electric light. The prevailing colour of the arcade or aisle of the bazaar, as well as of the crowd that fills it, is brown—brown dotted with red and white, the red being the tarboush, and the white the turban. As for the shops, their colours are so infinite that they produce the effect of an exceedingly bright herbaceous border arranged in the shadow of a wall.

Of the individual bazaars one of the cheeriest is that occupied by the leather sellers, for here are saddles of great magnificence, trappings for mules, and head ornaments for camels, blazing with every colour under the sun and alive with hanging balls and with bright things that jingle. There are, moreover, saddle-cloths of high degree, coloured girths and saddle-bags, brilliant haversacks, and leather bottles as reckless in tint as a child's toy-box. This bazaar is one of the most ancient as well as one most typical of the East. An English fox-hunter may wear a scarlet coat, but it would be unseemly if he went to the meet mounted on a yellow and blue saddle secured by girths of green and purple, his own back being hidden by a haversack embroidered with silver thread, while his horse was dripping on all sides with balls of wool, suspended on strings, or with tassels in black and pink, and at the same time was sparkling like a Christmas-tree.

Near by is the coppersmiths' quarter, made noisy enough by the clatter of fifty hammers, but very interesting as displaying a craft which has altered but little since the days of that Alexander for whom St. Paul had so strong a dislike that 'he delivered him unto Satan.' Here and in the smiths' bazaar is to be seen a primeval bellows made of a cow-skin, with the hair still on it, the same being shaped like a carpet bag. It is worked by a listless boy who has only to carry out the simple process of opening the bag and then shutting it. Here or here-about may be seen the first lathe of the first lathe-maker—the spindle of which is rotated by means of the string of a bow—as well as a locksmith at work on a lock which only the rogues of the 'Thousand and One Nights' would understand. The silk bazaar is another brilliant quarter of Damascus. Here is silk of every tint and texture, adapted to every purpose—from the beautiful keffiyeh or Arab head-cover, to a Battersea table-cover that bursts upon the eye with the effect of an explosion. Scarves and turban bands hang from the shop roof like rainbow-coloured stalactites or like the fibres of some wonderful banyan tree whose roots dip into a dyer's vat.

The cotton bazaar is a little disappointing, for although damask derived its name in the past from Damascus it is probable that the damask to be now seen in the city is derived from Manchester. This bazaar, which appears to be the Galeries Lafayette of Damascus, is ever filled with native women, waddling about confusedly like ants in a disturbed ant-heap. They serve to show that the great passion of women, the passion for shopping, is as intense in the unregenerate female

as it is in the most advanced. Some women were pecking eagerly about among the bales like fowls in a newly discovered pasture ; others turned the cottons over hurriedly as if they were hunting for a mouse. In the matter of bargaining the Moslem lady is hampered by her veil, the veil both muffling the shrillness of her speech and at the same time checking the volume of it. I imagined that one woman, who was shaking like a cinematograph figure and was screaming the while, must have been stabbed by the shop-walker, but the dragoman assured me that she was simply declining to pay what was the equivalent to the final halfpenny in the account and was calling somewhat freely upon Allah ('whose name be exalted') in connection with this righteous matter of discount.

The second-hand clothes bazaar is not pleasant. There are certain features about discarded clothing in the East—where insect life is luxuriant and where cholera is common—which it is not well to linger over. In each of these shops the garments dangling from the ceiling or wall look like the shrunken bodies of former possessors, so that each stall is a species of Blue Beard's chamber lacking the blood and the heads. Less easily identified articles of clothing hang down like the shrivelled leaves of some dreadful kind of weeping willow. It is said that each bazaar has its distinctive odour. This is true. Possibly a red deer could scent the old clothes bazaar in Damascus before the city was in sight.

Ten shops entirely full of scarlet slippers afford a striking object, while the fitting on of slippers in the open roadway, where the customer has the advantage of the

criticism of the passer-by, is also notable. Scarlet is not the only colour in the shoe bazaar. Soft yellow slippers are worn, as are also pointed shoes in any primary tint. There are clogs, moreover, made of wood and ornamented with little inlaid diamonds and squares of mother-of-pearl or of bone. A man will cut a pattern in a clog with his hands while he fixes the clog with his foot. A clog maker who had lost his great toe would apparently have to abandon his trade.

Those who love a blaze of yellow, a flood of primrose yellow, of maize yellow, or the yellow of a sand beach in the sun, should visit the basket bazaar, where their eyes will be feasted. The tobacco shops, which are so bright in England, are the dullest of any in the East. The tobacco is displayed in sacks, has the colour of dried peat, and the general aspect of fodder for animals. To choose tobacco from a series of coarse bags standing on the floor of a poor sort of hay store is inconsistent with the idea of purchasing a luxury.

The food shops in Damascus are remarkable, being indeed very unlike any corresponding establishments in the West ; yet human food, one would imagine, would differ less than human clothing among civilised people. There are innumerable cafés in Damascus, but they do not concern themselves with solid food. They are after-dinner resorts, places for coffee and tobacco, for conversation or general idling—corresponding, in fact, to the smoking-room of an English club. There are restaurants too, dealing mysteriously with meat and broth, but so full of steam as to make all details obscure even to the clearing up of the point as to whether the guests

themselves are not undergoing some process of stewing by steam. There is no doubt, however, that in the more elegant of these eating-houses it would be possible to order such a repast as the Lady Zubeydeh prepared for the sultan's steward, to wit 'a basin of zirbajeh sweetened with sugar, perfumed with rose-water, and containing different kinds of fricandoed fowls and a variety of other ingredients, such as astonished the mind.'

The average Damascene is a real 'man of the street.' He appears to indulge in an ambulatory meal, picking up his food as he goes, eating his meat in one bazaar, his sweets in a second, his dessert in a third, while he finally squats on the ground to take his coffee from an itinerant coffee vendor. If a man were to deposit himself anywhere by the street side it is probable that all the food he wanted would pass before him in the course of the day, although not necessarily in the order he would wish. If a merchant, sitting cross-legged in his shop, desires to smoke he beckons to him the first pipe vendor who comes in sight. This man brings him a nargilch, or other kind of pipe, fills it, lights it with a hot coal, and leaves the merchant to suck at it. In due course he returns for the pipe, receives his pay, and hands the mouthpiece on to the next customer. This common street pipe is no more agreeable to modern ideas than would be a general toothbrush, while to conduct smoking upon the principles of a book-lending library is a process that will remain peculiar to the East.

In Damascus the place of the 'bar' or refreshment-room counter is taken by itinerant drink sellers. They are for the most part uninviting-looking folk, being

unpleasantly damp. They carry plain water or liquorice water in goatskins, to drink from which would be, to the fastidious, akin to drinking from an ancient leather boot. Lemonade or raisin water, the drink of the smarter set, is carried in a two-handled jar with a narrow neck by a man who, as he walks, rattles the brazen cups from which all his customers refresh themselves. I imagine that to wipe this cup—a proceeding never dreamt of—would be equivalent to a reflection on the wholesomeness of the person who last made use of it. Yet Damascus seems to fare very well without these sanitary refinements.

From wandering merchants it is possible to buy nearly every article of food that can be conceived of, from hot roast meat to walnuts. Out of a couple of open sacks, slung on the back of a donkey, you can obtain dates or dried apricots, as well as less distinctive dried objects that may once have been fruits. From wooden tubs, carried also by a donkey, it is possible to purchase such foreboding items of food as cucumbers and turnips pickled in vinegar. The passer-by, moreover, may pick from a pannier a handful of pistachio nuts, or pluck from one of many greasy skewers a lump of meat that would make many a one turn vegetarian.

Of all these food hawkers—none of whom, it may be said, are for a moment silent—the vendor of hot roast meat is the most remarkable. In an iron trough, held vertically, is a fire for cooking. The trough is divided by what may be called two floors into three stories, in each of which is a fire. In front of this pillar of fire is a vertical iron spit upon which are impaled circular slices

of lean mutton, alternating with slabs of fat derived, according to the dragoman, from the sheep's tail. The chef—who is unclean—rotates this spit before the upright fire by turning a handle, like that of a barrel organ, fixed to the lower end of the meat column. As soon as the surface of the roll of meat is sufficiently cooked he cuts slices from the same and hands them to the diner. The rotating roll of frizzling mutton is by this means gradually reduced in girth until the spit alone is left. The gourmet can have his meat cut off from that part of the cylinder which is opposite to the ground floor fire or from those parts which are cooked on the first or second floors.

The bread, of course, is obtained at the bakers. It takes the form of pancake-shaped slabs which resemble pieces of thick chamois leather—a little burnt in places—rather than bread. The purchaser will buy half a dozen of these slabs, which he will roll up, as if he were rolling up six sheets of thick yellow paper, and will deposit them in his pocket. The first time I saw bread thus disposed of, projecting from a man's pocket, I mistook it for an unfamiliar form of Panama hat rolled up. It is well to note that this bread, when eaten, is not cut but broken, so that, indeed, about the time of noon the 'breaking of bread' is very general throughout the bazaar. There is another kind of bread which is made in the form of rings. A number of these quoits of crust, strung on a cord so as to form a kind of pastry necklace, will be seen hanging in festoons from the roofs of bakers' shops of the better type.

The variety of cakes purveyed in the city is endless,

whether regarded from the point of view of size, shape, composition, or colour. Some are sold hot, some are cold. Some are mere lumps of undecided dough, while others are finished discs the size of the seat of a chair. The majority are so tempting in appearance that even bakers from the Land o' Cakes would find much to learn in Damascus. Very popular in the streets is a thin wheaten cake, spread with butter and grape syrup and sprinkled with sesame seeds. This article takes the place of the stolid, uncompromising bun of the English refreshment-rooms—which bun seems to be impervious to change and to be an emblem of that melancholy which is assumed to be a feature of the British mind.

The confectioners' shops are among the most fascinating in Damascus. They are scrupulously clean and very daintily arranged. There are trays full of enticing confections of every shape and colour, sweets in balls, in strings or in rocky masses, sweets like cubes of green putty, sweets like masses of clear crystal, lumps of yellow jelly in dishes, blue basins full of white curds, little saucers of blancmange sprinkled with sliced cocoanut, pistachio nuts and almonds, open tarts, and finally humble nodules of batter frying in oil. From the great number of these shops it is evident that the Damascene has still as intemperate a love of sweet things as he had in the days of the 'Thousand and One Nights.' One of these dainty shops might well be the very one where Ajeeb the son of Hasan Bedr-ed-Deen, in company with his servant, ate a conserve of pomegranate grains and almonds sweetened with sugar, and drank rose-water sherbet infused with musk 'until their stomachs were

full.' It must have been no mean feast, for Ajeeb was very hearty, while the servant wielded a whip 'that could strike down a camel.'

The 'department' for drugs, spices, and perfumery is very enchanting, for here can be inhaled the undoubted and only reputable 'perfumes of Arabia.' Here one can obtain, as in the days of the Happy King, 'ten kinds of scented waters, rose-water, orange-flower water, and willow-flower water, together with sugar and a sprinkling bottle of rose-water infused with musk and frankincense, and aloes-wood, and ambergris, and musk and wax candles.' Owing to the fact that charms have become discredited there may be some difficulty in obtaining, at the same time, 'a round piece of benj of such potency that if an elephant smelt it he would sleep from one night to another.'

The barbers' shops present another interesting feature in the bazaar. The stalls are hung with mirrors, according to ancient custom, while the barbers themselves are busy, apparently all day long, shaving men's heads. Barbers and hair-cutters in all parts of the world are very apt to be garrulous, and I was interested to note that these minor artists of Damascus never ceased from chattering, whether they were at work or at rest. This is a very old grievance against the fraternity—as is made painfully evident in the story told by the tailor of Bagdad. He speaks of a young man who took infinite pains to find a barber who was competent and was at the same time 'a man of sense, little inclined to impertinence, that he may not make the head ache by his chattering.' The barber that this young man did finally

obtain so overwhelmed him with his speech that the youth 'felt as if his gall bladder would burst.' This distressing accident happily did not occur, but the barber talked with such deadly persistence that his flow of speech led in the end to the breaking of the leg of the tailor's friend, while, on the other hand, the shaving of his head was never completed.

A stirring but noisy feature in certain bazaars is the auction, which appears to spring up at any moment with the unexpectedness of a street row. The auctioneer, in the pursuit of the business, not only talks incessantly but maintains a state of perpetual movement, for he runs about from shop to shop and from person to person with the article for sale until a bid is offered that he can accept. His running comments have probably altered but little since the days of the 'Arabian Nights,' where the following report of his breathless utterance is to be found : 'O merchants ! O possessors of wealth ! Everything that is round is not a nut ; nor is everything long, a banana ; nor is everything that is red, meat ; nor is everything that is ruddy, wine ; nor is everything tawny, a date ! O merchants ! this precious article, whose value no money can equal, with what sum will ye open the bidding for it ? '

After many days of wandering through the labyrinth of shops there is left on the mind a sense of amazement at the number of things a man wants or thinks that he wants.

XXIX

THE CROWD

THERE is a belief, based upon evidence gathered by philologists, that the nations of Europe and certain of the peoples of Asia had their origin from a common stock, known as the Aryan race. It is supposed that the home of these primitive Aryans was somewhere about the southern steppes of Russia, and that in the process of time the family broke up and the members of it wandered away in various directions. Those who went towards the east founded the Persian nation and peopled the northern parts of India. Those who travelled to the north-west became known, in the fulness of days, as Slavs and Teutons, while from these two branches sprang the Russian and the Pole, as well as the Scandinavian and the Anglo-Saxon. Some wended their way to Greece and made the name of the Greek ever memorable, while the ancestors of the Celts and the Romans, following the course of the Danube, penetrated into Italy, France, and Spain.

Very many centuries have passed away since this astounding family scattered. It is not to be assumed that they 'moved' in a day, nor has it ever been suggested

that any strong family feeling was maintained among the parted relatives, or that the remote descendants of the present hour feel drawn towards the southern steppes of Russia as towards an ancient home. In spite of such indifference the whole family meets unconsciously once a year, the meeting-place being the bazaar in Damascus, and the time that of the Mecca pilgrimage. It was at this period that we chanced to be in the city, and could claim to take part in the gathering as representatives of one branch of the family. The gathering, be it noted, is an assembling together of representatives of the entire Aryan or Indo-European stock, and it is doubtful if in any other spot a meeting so comprehensive can be found.

There are Persians to be seen in the crowd, men for the most part distinguished by their gorgeous silks, as well as pilgrims from the northern provinces of India who are on their way back from Mecca. These frontier folk constitute probably the finest specimens of the original race, being tall and powerful men, many of whom are conspicuous in quilted coats and white turbans or conical hats made of fur. The Slavs are well represented by the immense body of Moslem pilgrims from various parts of Russia, as well as by casual Bulgarians, Illyrians, and Poles. The Teuton is portrayed by the German and the British man of business, while I have no doubt that a little search in Damascus would discover a Norwegian, a Swede, or a Dane. The Greeks, of course, are very prominent. There is, indeed, a Greek bazaar in Damascus where they reign supreme. In the matter of dress they adopt a simple compromise in the form of the tweed suit of the West and the tarboush of the East. A less happy

blending of these two worlds is afforded by the man who wears a shop-walker's frock coat and a white turban. He, however, is not a Greek, and may himself be in doubt as to his nationality. The descendants of the Roman and of the man of Gaul will be illustrated by the French railway engineer, the Spanish trader, and the Italian seaman from the port of Beyrouth.

It is as a spectacle, however, rather than as an assembly of men, that the crowd in the bazaar is of interest. It is a substantial crowd, for it fills the roads and alleys to the walls. It is a cheerful crowd, for although many go about their business with gravity, there are others who loiter along, idle, indifferent to time, fool-happy, and eager to be amused. In some narrow places in the bazaars, at the height of the day, the passage is wellnigh blocked, so that men must needs push and gasp their way through the strait, as a torrent through a gorge, while over the hubbub hangs a haze of sweat, noise, and dust. The place is as full of strange voices as a madman's cell, while above the general hum will rise, from time to time, a ripple of laughter, the yell of some mischievous boy, the call of the donkey driver, and the cry of the hawker of odds and ends.

The crowd is composed almost entirely of men, and, for the most part, of men wearing turbans and long robes. These robes, when worn by Dives, are of fine cloth, very stately and dignified, but when covering the lean loins of Lazarus they are of a mean stuff that once was white but has now taken upon itself the hue of the earth. These men in gowns, of whatever degree, recall the garb and bearing of medieval figures of the kind found

in ancient religious paintings, where they are seen kneeling before thrones, or carrying offerings, or in procession on a journey. There are very many red tarboushes among the heads of the people, with, now and then, the fur cap of the Jew. Jews are not so common in Damascus as they are in Jerusalem. They are as little contented-looking as an oriental Jew will ever allow himself to appear. Ringlets and side locks are 'not worn,' but the dressing-gown is clung to as well as the gaberdine and the flapping felt hat.

A proportion of the tarboush and turban wearers are quite florid in their dress, for in the place of the long robe may be found a jade-green jacket, a pink scarf for the waist, lemon-yellow headgear, and black, bag-like trousers. A white cloth round the tarboush, if it be no more than a shred of cotton, is considered *chic*, and with such a head-dress it would be appropriate to wear a fawn-tinted mantle over a black coat, or a long snuff-coloured cloak with sleeves as ample as those of a Master of Art's gown. Many of the men in the bazaar have their heads merely tied up or bandaged up with cotton cloth. They might have all come from some popular casualty ward, were it not for the fact that the surgical-like head-dressing varies from mauve to ruby, from cherry-red to pink, from green to brown or blue. A purple skull-cap edged with fur, worn with a grey coat over a lilac skirt, is much in vogue with those to whom dress is a serious thing.

Some of the less fortunate frequenters of the bazaar are mere bundles of rags, one rag of a cloak or coat having been placed over another such garment. A man of this

type, if cut in two, would look like a section of a many-coloured onion. His life and times can be read to a certain depth by the strata of his clothing, just as geological history can be read by stratified deposits. The outer rag is possibly grey and no doubt belongs to the present period. The blue rag beneath may go back five years; the brown-black shred, visible through the holes in the superjacent layers, may have been added to the collection twenty years ago, while possibly the filaments of red that appear to be in contact with the skin belong to the time of a joyous youth.

What may be the nationality of all these folk, and in what pursuits they are engaged, none but a superhuman dragoman could tell. They belong to the period of the 'Arabian Nights' as well as of to-day, for I have no doubt that among them are 'Zeytoon the bath keeper, and Saleea the wheat seller, and Owkal the bean seller, and Akresheh the grocer, and Homeya the dustman, and Akarish the milk seller.' The man I was most anxious to meet was the one-eyed calender, that particular one who, when cutting wood, found a trap-door at the foot of a tree, which same led to a staircase and finally to a 'lady like a pearl of high price.' I came upon him after many days. There was no doubt as to his identity. It was his left eye that was missing, as the story says. He wore a conical grey hat with a rag round it, a loose pink jacket, and a blue skirt. In his hand he carried a long staff. It was quite evident that he had passed through boisterous times, for it was this calender who had the awful experience with the Efreet, Jarjarees the son of Rejmoos. I looked in vain for the son of the vizier

El-Fadl. It may be remembered that he was a youth very bountifully endowed by nature, for he was 'like the shining full moon, with brilliant countenance and red cheek marked with a mole like a globule of ambergris and with grey down.'

Wandering through the town are many Bedouins from the desert. Especially are they to be met with in certain quarters, in windy squares, and about the great caravan-serai. They are supremely interesting, tawny men, sun-burnt and weather-stained. Many have very wrinkled brows as if from long looking at a sand trail blazing in the sun. They wear a grey head-cloth kept in place by a rope of black goat's hair twisted round the skull, and are enveloped in a wide, shapeless cloak fashioned of brown and cream-coloured cloth in stripes, each stripe being a foot wide. The design is a little loud for city wear, but it must be useful in the waste of the desert, since the cloak could be seen from afar as readily as a striped buoy in a channel.

There were numerous Turkish soldiers in Damascus, who had been disbanded there after a period of active service, and who were supposed to be making their way home. They were about the least military-looking people I have in recollection. Strong and gallant men, no doubt, but slovenly and very gross, they drifted about in the bazaar like khaki bundles in a tideway. Their heads were wrapped up in sulphur-coloured towels. They wore their socks outside their trousers, and their boots, which had never been either laced or blacked, were woefully down at heel. They were slow-moving, tortoise-like men, as vacant in expression as a

person under chloroform. Some officers we saw on the parade ground of the city, were, on the other hand, exceedingly smart and fierce, although their ferocity was a little softened by the fact that many carried dainty umbrellas, while others wore galoshes over boots which no doubt were accustomed to wade through blood.

In addition to the ordinary Damascene crowd are the numerous strangers within the gates, the passers-by, the pilgrims returning from Mecca, and the human flotsam and jetsam that have drifted from the wide East into the backwaters of Damascus. It is very difficult for the unlearned to ascertain the nationalities of the various migrants, for the normal dragoman appears to divide all unusual folk into two classes. If the indefinite man is of yellow complexion and wears boots he is a Russian; if he is of brown complexion and does not wear boots he is an Indian. As this is not a method of classification employed in the science of ethnology the results are imperfect.

Those who stand at the street corner would see go by, in the course of the day, a couple of Nubians as black as coal and dressed in black and white, followed by Moors in white with coarse cowls over their heads. Next may come along sun-tanned, placid men with features of a Mongolian type, who wear Robinson Crusoe hats of black astrakhan, fur coats, with the bare skin outside, or capes of black goat's hair, the costume being completed by cumbrous boots. They are reputed to come from Kurdistan. There are other Mongolian-featured folk who wear immense, black, dome-shaped caps trimmed with brown fur, and long grey coats with ample skirts.

These, I am told, come from 'somewhere north of India'—a vague address which would include also the Isle of Wight.

There are very few women to be met with in the streets. With rare exceptions they will be dressed in black and will be veiled. The younger of these are picturesque enough, for they have well-shaped heads and move with a graceful, languorous ease. Of more than one it would be fitting to say that she had—as the Arabian teller of tales would express it—'a figure like the letter Alif.' Of the beauty of these ladies it is of course impossible to speak, but one is prepared to believe that, like Shahrazad's heroines, each will have eyebrows like the new moon of Ramadan, a nose like the edge of a polished sword, cheeks like anemones, and a mouth like the seal of Suleyman, so that, considered generally, every one of them would be 'a temptation to God's servants.' Occasionally a veiled woman will pass by who is dressed wholly in green, or a pretty, white-faced Jewess will pick her way demurely through the crowd. She will be clad in black to conform to the canons of propriety, but will so far exhibit the weakness of the flesh as to indulge herself in pink stockings and a bodice of cerulean blue. Women of the humbler classes, coming in from the country, will be riding on donkeys, riding astride, be it noted, after the fashion of Eastern women everywhere, and as no doubt the Virgin Mary rode with the Babe. The old masters were apt to depict the Virgin in her flight as a pale, stiff, self-conscious Italian lady, mounted sideways on a donkey as if sitting on a bench. Possibly they had never seen the lithe, olive-skinned

peasant woman astride of a donkey, or, if so, had failed to note the gracefulness of her pose.

Over and above the folk who tramp from sunrise to sunset through the streets are the men who sit in the shops. Some of these are so still and so silent that they appear to have been hypnotised. Others are reading the Koran or repeating their prayers. Two or three may be talking together with such solemnity and with such dignified gesture that they may be philosophers discussing the origin of all things. A few will be smoking in profound peace, while others are adding up accounts with such an air of effort as is displayed by a ploughboy doing sums on a slate. Now and then an old and lonely man, with hazy eyes and furrowed brow, will be seen sitting limply on the ground with his back to a wall, the picture of one who awaits the coming of death.

Very interesting folk also are the letter writers. The humbler of these squat at the street corners, while their more fortunate brethren occupy little packing-case-like shops. The more exalted of these shops are furnished with a striped sofa and a striped armchair, while the less ambitious have to be content with a couple of rush-bottom stools. The client is usually a woman who, deeply veiled, kneels or crouches by the side of the writer. She is so very voluble that the scribe—a bored man in a red tarboush—has to restrain the outpouring of her speech. He possibly explains that the day is long and that Arabic characters take time to form. Moreover, there is much delay when the ink on the sheet has to be dried with sand. Those who cluster about the writers in the road are mostly Bedouins or peasants. They have not much

to say, but speak with vigour. Often I think the message they would have conveyed is a message of vituperation, if one might judge from the violence and heat with which the correspondent occasionally dictates the script. He is apparently anxious to insert as many terms of abuse as the fee will allow of.

Great as is the crowd in the bazaar, and mixed as is its composition, there are everywhere good order and smiling amiability. On occasion, however, a sudden shriek breaks forth in the genial street, followed by the sound of a slap, and in a moment the loungers in the bazaar are drawn into a heated clump, as particles of iron are clustered round a magnet, and, behold, in the centre of a dense circle of eager turbans and tarboushes and of wagging tongues, are two perspiring men, screaming at one another and snarling like hyenas. I imagine that the words that explode into the air are about the same as of old: ‘Woe to thee, thou vilest of men! thou misbegotten wretch and nursling of impurity!—the terms being modified, no doubt, and, if need be, expanded to produce the full corrosive effect of modern invective.

These Eastern people are still as they always have been, very extreme in their methods of expressing emotion. The least quarrel between lovers, in the ‘Arabian Nights’ stories, causes the man to at once fall into a fit, and the lady, as being the finer organism, to display a series of highly finished convulsions which are maintained with spirit for days. In extreme cases the distressed Juliet may, after slapping her face, ‘roll about on the floor like a serpent.’ Men often weep until they become

insensible, or until 'the world looks yellow.' A damsel in great trouble will confide to a friend that 'her liver is broken in pieces.' The appropriate ritual to be observed on hearing of the death of a relative may be gathered from the following formula set down in the book of tales: 'And when my master heard my words the light became darkness before his face, he was paralysed and the strength of his back failed him and he rent his clothes and plucked his beard and slapped his face and threw his turban from his head and ceased not to slap his face until the blood flowed from it.' With this somewhat heating ceremony appropriate expressions are to be employed, while it is also essential that the bereaved man should, as soon as convenient, repair to a dry road or path in order that he may throw dust upon his head.

It is not only in the expression of wrath, of lovesickness, or of sorrow that the folk of the East are excessive. Demonstrations of pure affection are carried out with alarming emphasis, for is it not recorded in the stories told to the Happy King that a certain damsel 'gave El-Amjad a kiss that sounded like the cracking of a walnut'?

Besides the men and the women and the boys and the girls are the animals that form a part of the crowd in the bazaar—to wit, the line of camels, the horses with gay trappings, and the donkeys that are laden with many things, from an ancient and toothless hag who spurs on the animal with her bare heels, to a dead sheep or the noxious panniers in which the town refuse is conveyed away beyond the walls.

As notable as any of these are the dogs—the pariah dogs. They are to be found everywhere in the town, but mostly in the open streets—a miserable band of outcasts and beggars. The pauper dog, the abject, cringing, homeless loafer, the dog not only without a master but without a human friend, is a kind unknown in England, but here he wanders in his hundreds. Of what breed these dogs profess to be I cannot say. They are merely dogs. Some few are black, but the majority appear to have been, in happier times, brown, and to have been changed to a jaundiced yellow partly by being bleached by the sun, partly by the anæmia of misery, and partly by the covering of dirt which clots their coats. They all seem old and hungry, while all are thin and very tired. A few of them are lame or are covered with sores, while the greater number of the forlorn pack are mangy or have weak eyes. They are pitiable to look upon not only on account of their infirmities but because they are so very unhappy. There is just a trace of the look of a dog left in their eyes, but it lacks the glow of comradeship, of confidence and of *bonhomie* which makes lovable the countenance of the dog who lives among friends.

One episode I remember that no one would wish to see again. One of these miserable vagrants, a mere phantom of aching bones, is watching a man while he eats a roll of bread. The dog shivers with excitement and expectancy, his mouth waters, he is so hungry that he can hardly contain himself, his bleared eyes become almost dog-like again, there is coming back into them a memory of the old, world-long friendship between the man and the dog. He even pricks up a torn ear, holds

his head on one side, wags a bone of a tail, and is very nearly a generous-hearted, man-adoring dog once more, when a kick in the face from a heavy shoe sends him staggering into the gutter, a snarling, mean, malignant-minded outcast.

XXX

ATTAR OF ROSES

THE gardens of Damascus are full of roses ; the damask rose takes its name from the city, while among the strange and ancient things still manufactured in the town is attar of roses. As my wife and I wished to purchase some of this perfume, we were taken by the dragoman to a certain merchant who was to be found in a fragrant corner of the bazaar. His shop was full of pleasant things, things agreeable to smell, to eat, and to look upon. The merchant was a handsome, staid, and venerable man who conducted his business with great solemnity and made of a common transaction a picturesque ceremonial. He had piercing black eyes and a grey beard trimmed with the utmost nicety. He was tall and very thin. On his head was a turban of white and gold cloth folded around a crimson skull-cap. He wore a mouse-grey waistcoat of abnormal length, the same being edged with innumerable buttons. Over the vest was a long, mouse-grey, academic robe lined with brown fur. He was so dignified and courtly a man that to buy of him seemed to be little less than purchasing

a cake of soap from the chancellor of a university arrayed in his full robes of office.

The merchant sent for two stools and motioned us to sit down in the roadway before the shop. This we did with as much awe as if we were about to take part in some occult rites. He then handed each of us a lump of sweetmeat, as if to keep us quiet, and in a moment we felt that we were about ten years old. From a gap in the wall he drew out an ancient box which he opened with a curious key. If a smoke had come out when the lid was raised, and had turned into a genie, I should hardly have been surprised. In the box was something wrapped up in silk. He proceeded to unwind it with precision, and in time revealed a glass bottle full of what appeared to be tallow.

The day was cold and the dragoman explained that attar of roses became solid at a low temperature. The dragoman was our connecting link with the outer world, and from him I had ascertained (in a whisper such as would be proper to a question asked in church) that the attar was sold by the drop, and that the price of each minim was equal to about three-half pence. I could no more have dared to discuss halfpence with this grave Arabian than to have asked an archbishop in his vestments for a penny stamp. I whispered that I wished to have a hundred drops.

The merchant now produced a candle, and beckoned to him a boy who appeared to emerge from the earth like a familiar spirit. Without a word the boy took the candle over to a charcoal fire burning in a shop on the other side of the way, and brought it back lighted.

The old man then proceeded to warm the bottle over the candle in order to melt the contents. It was an interesting process. The candle was not visible to us as we sat—the shop was dark, being almost like a cave in a cliff, so that the fine, sharply cut features of the old man were illumined as if from some crucible fire. His face and the delicate feminine hand that held the bottle stood out against the gloom with a supernatural glow. He became at once an Eastern alchemist. Strange reflections were thrown upon the wall, the shadow of the turban took the form of a giant head, wondrous things appeared on the shelves that I had not noticed before, while curious flashes of light played over the bottle as he rotated it in his hand. The bottle might have held the Elixir of Life.

The silence of the old man and his intense watching of the vial became almost oppressive. At last the attar was melted, and then, standing erect in the faint light of the recess, he proceeded to drop one hundred drops into a tiny bottle that he produced—as he produced all things—from one of the invisible cupboards with which he was surrounded. This was also a solemn process, for, as each drop fell, he counted the number in Arabic, ‘wahid, tnein, tlateh, arbaa, khamseh, sitteh, saba.’ He rolled out the words as if they were the words of an incantation, and it was with some sense of relief that the last utterance was reached—‘miyeh,’ one hundred.

The business part of the ceremony was completed by the dragoman, who dealt coarsely with francs and even with centimes. For my own part I felt that this cabalistic seance could only be appropriately concluded in the coinage of the ‘Arabian Nights’—namely in golden

deenars or in handfuls of dirhems. As we made other purchases the impassive dragoman demanded a bill—a bill from an alchemist! I herewith append the document, which was written upon blue paper and dried with sand. I am sometimes doubtful if it is really a bill and if it is not more probably the formula for the Elixir of Life.

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XXXI

THE GREAT MOSQUE

THERE is only one accredited or standard 'sight' in Damascus, and that, as Mark Twain would observe, 'is easily avoided.' It is the Great Mosque of the Omeiyades. It stands in the centre of the town, upon the site of that house of Rimmon which was the place of worship for all people in the days of Naaman the Syrian. Here also was erected—so tradition avers—the altar which filled King Ahaz with amazement when he came to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. The altar was so wonderful in its pattern and its workmanship that Ahaz had a drawing made of it, and from the detailed plan a replica was produced by Urijah the priest. This beautiful house of Rimmon fell into ruin and was replaced by a Roman temple dedicated to Jupiter. Some remains of the Temple of Jupiter can still be seen in the form of fragments of massive walls that look as old as the rocks upon the hillside. More than that, there is a portion of the west wall of the present mosque which is attributed 'with a tolerable amount of certainty' to the house that King Ahaz visited.

At the commencement of the fifth century the Roman

temple was replaced by a Christian cathedral, which church 300 years later (A.D. 705-715) was converted into a mosque of exceptional magnificence. Unfortunately this splendid structure was destroyed by fire in 1069, was again burned down in 1400, and was finally laid waste by a third destructive fire as lately as 1893. In the last conflagration two treasured articles vanished in the smoke, to wit, a book and a human skull. The book was one of the four original copies of the Koran, the skull was the fleshless head of no less a person than John the Baptist. With the sacred bones disappeared also the exquisite shrine in which they had been preserved.

It will be gathered, therefore, that the present mosque is modern. A few relics of the old glory remain in the form of beautiful gates with bronze-plated doors, an ancient fountain dating from A.D. 1020, and some traces of the superb decoration which made the venerable house illustrious. Possibly the most fascinating features in the building now are the three minarets, which are fine specimens of oriental architecture, and which, in elegance or daintiness, could hardly be surpassed.

One would be prepared to find that the janitor or seneschal of so august a building as the Great Mosque of the Omeiyades in Damascus would be an imposing and stately person, clad with all the insignia of authority. As a matter of fact he is a meek and shrunken man who receives the visitor in bed, for the unfortunate official is bedridden. We found him lying, just inside the Great Gate, on a low, wooden bedstead which might have been as old as the original mosque. In the matter of bed-clothes the invalid was buried beneath a heap of blue rags,

over which were laid two or three canvas sacks such as are met with in granaries. Finally, in the place of the quilt or 'eiderdown' of modern times was a piece of Indian matting apparently lifted from the adjacent floor. No well-trained nurse, with an orderly mind, could have approved this method of bed-making, nor of the general arrangements of the sick room. The head of the invalid was wrapped up in that kind of blue cloth the butchers use, so that it looked like a piece of meat ; while over this blue wrapping was a great brown cowl. The porter had evidently been warned by his medical advisers to avoid a chill, for there is no doubt that the main entry of a mosque in the winter is draughty. On entering the gate we assumed a sympathetic, bedside manner, but it was unnecessary, for the alertness with which the sick official gathered in the miscellaneous coins we handed him could not have been exceeded by a Monte Carlo croupier. The money, together with a banana which he was eating, he put under the bed-clothes. Being infidels and heretics we were compelled to place felt slippers over our boots before we could enter the shrine. These slippers the invalid insisted upon applying himself, while to help him in this service we placed our muddy feet, one after the other, in his bed in obedience to his direction.

The present mosque, being not yet twenty years old, has little that is admirable about it except its great size. The immense white court, with its colonnade, its fountain pond, and its many-coloured crowd of idlers and worshippers, is very picturesque. The mosque itself is on the lines of a basilica, with nave and aisles and rows of

pillars crowned with Corinthian capitals. The building is bare and unfurnished-looking. It haunts the memory by reason of the numerous lamps and chandeliers of fulminating vulgarity which hang unabashed from the ceiling. The modern decoration is nerveless and tawdry, while some of the windows are filled with coloured glass which would outrage the conservatory of the paltriest suburban villa.

There are some unusual features in the precincts of the mosque, notably a curiously dirty house in a court-yard of trodden earth. The house is a house of much mystery. It hangs over a pond, being supported in that attitude by two very ancient and beautiful pillars which must have belonged to the original mosque. It conveys the impression of a lame and unclean beggar leaning upon two crutches of delicately carved sandal-wood.

Near to the house of mystery is a pretty garden full of roses, with a fountain in it, and a pergola which can be no other than a joy of the earth in the month of June. In the garden is a little building, very quaint and friendly-looking. It has the aspect of a summer-house, being a retreat of consummate peace. In reality it is a sepulchre, for it contains the tomb of the terrible Saladin, that hard man of arms who was the hero of the Second Crusade. The tomb is of white marble, carved in panels and decorated with a border of primitive design in black and gold. It is covered by an exquisite shawl, while above it hangs a Damascene lamp of perfect workmanship. Some glorious blue tiles line the walls of the chamber, and in the windows is ancient coloured glass very delicate in tint. There is nothing in the little room

to suggest the fearsome warrior. Indeed the quietness of the place, the childlike garden, the roses, the splashing fountain, and the hovering pigeons would make one think that beneath the marble lay the body of the lady who, for a thousand and one nights, prattled her fancies to the Happy King.

Scarcely less interesting than the mosque of Damascus is the great Khan, the principal inn or caravanserai of the city. Here are stored the strange things that are brought to Damascus from indefinite parts of the world. Here the camel caravans, that have crept across the desert from Bagdad and from lands of the East still more remote, unload and rest. Here is the journey's end.

The Khan takes the form of an immense, cathedral-like building, very lofty, very solemn and, at the moment, very still. The roof is made up of a series of domes which are supported by enormous square pillars. Both the pillars and the walls are built of black and yellow-grey stones disposed in alternating horizontal lines of considerable boldness. Around the base of each dome is set a circle of arched windows, filled with innumerable discs of yellowish glass. It is through these windows, as through the clerestory in a church, that the rays of the sun stream into the colossal building. This method of lighting has a magical effect, due to the dead black shadows on the one hand, and, on the other, to the gleams of gold which shoot across the mist like a flight of arrows.

In the centre of the court is a vast stone basin of water. Here the camels drink, here the travel-stained

men wash their faces and their feet, and here the merchants dip up water for the making of coffee. High up in the walls of the building are galleries with pointed arches and stone balustrades, while at many a point and many a level will be barred windows that open into cavernous storerooms. The whole of the floor is occupied with bales of goods, with sacks full of coffee, and bags full of dates, with sugar bags, with barrels of olive oil, with bundles of crackling hides, and with a medley of uncouth packages, the contents of which are hard to tell. Here and there are gigantic scales of primitive pattern. They are large enough to weigh an ox, and are of a type that has remained unaltered since the days when things were first 'weighed in the balance.' Round the wide entry half-naked porters—the descendants of the memlooks of ancient days—are shifting sacks and bales ; in quiet corners turbaned men in long robes sit smoking or drinking coffee, while in sleepy tones they discuss the state of the market.

Across the gateway of the Khan there hangs, in a formidable festoon, a heavy iron chain. Its height above the ground is such that it will just allow the man of average stature to come in, but it prevents the entrance of the laden camel or of the man with a burden on his shoulders.

There is some romance about the beginning of things : there is even a deeper sentiment about their ending. Here at this gateway is a place where things end. Here is the goal of the caravan, the end of the journey. Day after day, for weary weeks, the one object clear in the eyes of every tired man on the march is the gateway of

the Khan at Damascus and within it the shadow of great peace. No place can provide a more picturesque conception of the journey's end or more graphically symbolise the close of the travail of human life. The long-pondered gateway is at last in sight, the chain is lifted, while under the archway stalks the leading camel and the footsore man who, for many a long mile, has tramped at the head of the caravan. The little white-walled town out of which they filed at sunrise a month or two ago is almost forgotten. Much softened, too, is the memory of the sullen march from every dawn to every twilight. Less harsh is the thought of the blazing sun, of the aching limbs, of the many alarms.

Here at last is the end—water and shade, safety and a couch for dreamless sleep, with thanks to Allah that the work is done.

XXXII

A TRAGIC JOURNEY

If our arrival at Damascus was attended with too little circumstance, our departure from that place was attended with too much. Apparently in other and holier days there have been difficulties in the way of leaving the city. St. Paul, it may be remembered, departed from Damascus in a basket which was lowered from the top of the city wall into the ditch. We should have preferred this method of leaving the town to that which we came to experience.

It was our intention to proceed from Damascus to Beyrouth and then take a steamer to Port Said. Unfortunately the Beyrouth-Damascus railway had long been blocked with snow and was still buried beneath accumulating drifts. Determined inquiries as to when the line would be clear led to no more precise information than that it would be open 'soon.' 'Might it be clear by to-morrow?' 'We hope so.' 'Might it be blocked for another fortnight?' 'Oh, assuredly.' As Damascus is a comfortable place to stay at, as the interest of the city is inexhaustible, and as the bulk of our luggage was

at Beyrouth, we resolved to tarry in Damascus until such time as the snow had melted.

At this juncture another difficulty arose. Great numbers of pilgrims from Mecca were pouring into the city day by day. Most of these were proceeding northwards to Beyrouth, but were detained for the same reason that detained us. Damascus, large as it is, was becoming inconveniently full, and then among the beleaguered pilgrims cholera broke out. Whether the cholera would vanish 'soon,' like the snow, or whether it would stay and spread so that the place would be darkened by the shadow of death, none could tell. As a matter of fact the cases proved to be very few, the epidemic to be limited and indeed trivial. Before, however, that happy fact became known in the bazaars it was pointed out to me, in a way I was unable to ignore, that if the cholera did spread it was just possible that the city might be placed in quarantine, when none could leave it except by the road to the burial-ground. I was therefore advised to return by train to Haifa while yet there was time, and, after collecting the stray baggage, to embark at that place for Port Said.

Now the distance from Damascus to Haifa by rail is only 176 miles. The line is down hill for a great part of the way, while the Hauran and the Jordan valley, both of which are traversed, are level plains. Yet in spite of this the journey occupies a whole day, 'from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve.' There was a good deal of oriental vagueness about the train. It was said to leave Damascus at sunrise, but I gathered that the actual astronomical moment was determined not by the sun

but by the station-master. If that official had had a bad night the sunrise might be seriously delayed. If, on the other hand, he had awakened early and was in high spirits he might declare that the sun was up, while the night was still at its blackest, and incontinently start the train on its way to the coast. To catch a train of this illusive character requires some forethought, so, in order to meet all contingencies which might arise from the state of the station-master's mind, it was arranged that we should be called at 3 A.M. The process of awakening having been carried out with the noise of a bombardment, we had a meal termed breakfast at the exceptional hour of 3.30 A.M. and left the hotel, chilled and confused, at four in the morning.

It was a fine starry night, but very cold. The drive through the city was full of interest, for a sleeping town is always curious. Save for a few prowling dogs the streets were empty. Every house was barricaded. I can imagine that the streets, with their overhanging upper stories, looked as the streets of Old London must have appeared at night at the time of the Great Plague. Here and there a light shone in an upper window, where one might suppose that it lit a sick-room and a plague-stricken man tossing on the bed. Here and there we passed a watchman carrying a lantern. He moved listlessly as would a man in a town where there were but few living people left to watch. On the roadway, in front of certain of the shops, a porter, wrapped up in rags, was lying. He might have died of the plague and have been deposited in the lane by his friends. More horrible-looking was a watchman sound asleep in a chair, in front of a house,

for he was so limp and so askew that he seemed to have been sitting dead in his chair for hours. Another man asleep on a pile of corn sacks, with his arms outstretched, his mouth open, and his head rolled to one side, looked the picture of death. There were lights in courtyards, suggesting that the household was in distress and that the servants were sitting up watching. Two lean men were warming their hands over a fire in a blind alley. If this were in reality plague-smitten London I should take them to be the men who at dawn would perambulate the streets to remove dead bodies in a cart.

We were at last clear of the town and out into the vacant night, when a man suddenly emerged from the gloom and, with yells and waving of arms, motioned us to stop. We did, and were immediately enveloped in a perfect cyclone of shrill speech. He was too fluent for a highway robber, but it was not until the gust of words had subsided that it became known that he was a philanthropist. It appeared that, owing to the rains, a culvert beneath the road had given way, leaving a ditch into which a cab horse had fallen during the night and had broken its leg. It was to save us from the ditch—upon the brink of which we were already standing—that the man of words had kindly interposed.

Some way farther along the blank road we came to a stockade of posts, where we stopped and, as instructed, got out. This we were told was the station, although so far as anything visible was concerned we might as well have been in the centre of the Sahara. Apparently there is something occult, or even sacred, about a railway station in Syria, for neither carriages nor other mean

things on wheels are allowed to come within a certain respectful distance of the presence. We stumbled after the dragoman across some very uneven ground in the direction of a solitary light. This light, poor as it was, revealed the corner of a small, low, stone building precisely like a miner's cottage in Cornwall. The building was the station. The light came from a lantern placed on the ground in front of a sleeping man who was surrounded by a bank or entrenchment of bread. Probably no conception of the railway terminus of the capital of a country could be more remarkable than this. In place of the usual immense fabric and the vast dome of glass and iron was a miner's cottage, with a lantern on the ground by the side of a sleeping man surrounded by bread.

The time was now 4.50 A.M. Further investigation showed an empty train standing derelict at a little distance from the stone cottage. Between the latter and the train was a slope of very bumpy ground such as is met with around houses in course of erection, and this we concluded would be the platform. It was occupied by a number of large bundles which proved to be men wrapped up in blankets and asleep. Similar bundles were propped up, in an unsteady row, against the wall of what we now knew to be the Central Station of Damascus. These sleeping men were pilgrims from Mecca. They were on their way to the coast, as we were, but they were taking no risks as to catching the train. They knew something of oriental railways and their habits, and by sleeping on the platform between the booking-office and the actual carriages they evidently felt that the

train could scarcely creep away without their knowledge. The men who were asleep on the ground about the miner's cottage were by no means all the intending travellers by 'the early train.' Close to the building were a number of tents full of silent human beings whose feet projected here and there from beneath the canvas. There had been a camp fire in the centre of the bivouac, but it had evidently long died out. It was apparent now that the man with the lantern and the bank of bread represented the refreshment-room. The buffet was not yet open, for the baker was still wrapt in his dreams.

Our coming was an event of moment, for we awoke the slumbering station. But for us the passengers, the station-master, the ticket clerk, and the porters might possibly have slept until noon. We woke the first series of men accidentally by falling over them and by treading on their bodies. They arose in panic, dreaming no doubt that the train had gone, and proceeded to rouse their friends and to aimlessly drag their luggage about. In a few minutes we witnessed what was no less than a resurrection scene. We found the terminus in a state of silence and the ground occupied apparently by dead men. Almost immediately these bodies rose from the earth, took up their beds, and walked. In a while out of the camp of tents poured several scores of pilgrims to join the shuffling crowd. All of them seemed confused, as would be a like body of men on the resurrection morning.

It was the train now that afforded a surprise. It consisted of three closed vans—labelled, as we perceived later on, for eight horses or forty men—a third-class

corridor carriage, and a like carriage with first-class compartments. The carriages were in darkness and apparently sealed up. But pilgrims began to beat on the doors of the goods wagons with their hands, when, to my amazement, they opened and out of each poured no fewer than forty sleep-muddled Moslems. These devout men were in fact making exceedingly sure of the train by sleeping in it. Some of those who were released from what must have been a chamber of asphyxiation began forthwith to clamour at the doors of the third-class carriage, when, behold, that structure in turn proceeded to give up its dead, for out of its doors stumbled or fell more than enough men to fill it, I should imagine, twice over. The man-producing powers of the place appeared to be now exhausted, for the crowd already amounted—as was afterwards made clear—to over 150 souls. But this was not all, as was proved when an excited man attacked the first-class carriage which had, up to this moment, exhibited no sign of life. He beat violently upon the walls and doors of the same, screaming the while 'Aboo-Shihab, Aboo-Shihab.' The man who made this onslaught upon the irresponsible carriage was apparently connected with the railway. He not only screamed and kicked the doors with his feet but he thumped the windows with his fist. For a long time there was no response to this vast outburst of noise ; but finally a sleepy man, whom I supposed to be Aboo-Shihab, opened the door (which he had locked from the inside) and stepped to the ground like one in a trance. He was followed by many others, all of whom were evidently railway men who, not wishing to miss the starting of

the train or to be late to their work, had wisely slept on the field of their labours.

Up to this moment the stone cottage had exhibited no evidence of human occupation. It still remained silent and dark in spite of the fact that the dragoman had been hammering upon the door with an umbrella for some time. Possibly the inhabitants of the building would have remained lost to the world for the rest of the day had it not been for the actively minded man who had awakened Aboo-Shihab. This enthusiast, at 5.15 A.M., seized a bell and rang it like a demented person for a considerable period. The effect produced was marvellous. The pilgrims began to cry aloud and to rush to and fro like people in a burning house. As each man dragged his belongings with him the platform became a place of danger. There was evidently a belief that the train was starting at once, although there was no engine attached to it, nor was there even a sign of one; so they began to climb into the third-class carriage and the vans as if they had but few seconds to spare. The bellringing, however, had an effect upon the little stone house, for in a while a light appeared, and later on bolts were withdrawn and the door opened. I was anxious to have a peep at the station-master, the man upon whose word the rising of the sun depended, but he was as difficult to discover among the buzzing crowd as a queen bee in a swarm. Consequently I never saw him—a circumstance I shall always regret.

After a while the pilgrims became calmer again; they even strolled about, chatted with one another, bought bread of the baker, and generally behaved as

people of leisure to whom railway travelling is rather a bore. At 5.30 A.M., however, the awakener of Aboo-Shihab seized the bell again and rang it for his very life. The effect was again astounding. The loitering pilgrims were once more electrified. They once more made a rush for the carriage doors as people rush to the exits of a burning theatre ; they blocked the doors, they trampled upon one another, they fought to get in, while those who found any attempt at entry impossible flitted to and fro on the platform as folk deprived of reason.

Near about 6 A.M. the bell was rung for the third time, but the pilgrims had not yet recovered from the last shock, so beyond a general shudder it produced no visible effect. As a matter of fact the platform was deserted, every man was already in his place, the engine had been coupled on, the baker had sold all his bread, had blown out his lamp, and could be seen wending his way towards the city. The dawn was appearing. It would seem as if the ringing of the bell had awakened even the sun. The light fell upon one of the most forlorn-looking railway stations I had ever seen, upon the deserted camp, upon the ashes of the fire, and upon a wide drift of litter that was indescribable. As soon as the bell had ceased, the train, without further ceremony, glided out into the mist, and we knew that the sun was at last at liberty to rise.

It is desirable to note—in connection with what happened later on—that next to the engine came the three closed goods vans, each containing about fifty pilgrims, and that it was followed by the third-class

corridor carriage which held no fewer than forty more devotees from Mecca. At the end of the train was the first-class carriage in which we and our dragoman were the sole passengers. The pilgrims were Russian Moslems, men of a marked Mongolian type of face, who were clad in heavy coats, one coat being worn over the other, while the outer garment was peeled off, on occasion, to make a praying carpet. They carried with them a good deal of untidy baggage, varying from battered German trunks and sailors' sea bags to bundles in blankets. With the same were associated such odd articles of luggage as lamps, jugs, and cooking pots, with, above all, the inevitable samovar which they clung to as if it had been a sacred image.

As has already been said (p. 200) the descent from the tableland to the plain is by a mountain railway of considerable length and of no mean degree of steepness. We came to about the worst part of the incline at 2.30 in the afternoon. The line at this point follows a rocky defile. The road, which is very narrow, is represented by a ledge cut on the side of an almost vertical cliff. Above the line is the precipitous face of the hill, while below, at the foot of the great wall of rock, is the river, converted into a torrent by the recent rains. At this somewhat hair-raising spot the engine was proceeding very slowly, when we suddenly felt a shock which I imagined was due to the carriage being struck by a falling rock. There followed immediately a second blow like to the first, and then I became aware of the fact that the train was off the line. Before I fully realised that there was very little margin for a manœuvre of this

kind we came to a sudden stop. I jumped out and made my way to the front of the train. On arriving there I was astounded to see that both the engine and the tender were missing, and, looking down over the cliff, I saw both these vehicles in the river. Apart from the roar of the stream everything was so quiet that these essential parts of the train might have been lying in the water for weeks. The engine was upside down and was almost entirely submerged in the muddy water, the wheels alone being visible above the flood. The tender was the right way up, but the water reached to the level of the floor, while it was empty of every particle of coal. The drop from the line to the river bed was about forty to fifty feet.

We were relieved to see two men—the driver and the stoker—crawling out of the river. Their escape from immediate death was due to the fact that the engine, in turning over in its fall, had thrown them on to a slope of stones, on to just such an incline as forms the talus at the foot of a mountain. The officials on the train immediately went to the assistance of their comrades. The approach to the water's edge was difficult, and still more difficult was the conveying of the injured men up an adjacent slope. The stoker, who was a Turk, was suffering a good deal from shock, was badly cut about the head and face and much bruised elsewhere. The engine-driver, a Bulgarian, was unhappily in a worse plight, for, in addition to superficial injuries, it was evident that one of the abdominal organs had been ruptured. Both of the men were placed lying down in the compartment next to ours. They were in great pain, but fortunately

I had with me a medicine case and a flask of whisky. After two doses of morphia they each expressed themselves as much better. The stoker began to regain his pulse, but the poor engine-driver, although free from pain, showed no amendment, and it was evident that, as no operation was possible in this wild ravine, his case was hopeless.

As to the cause of the accident no light was forthcoming, but it was quite clear that the carriages had not been struck by any falling rock as I had supposed. The first of the three goods vans full of pilgrims was wholly derailed, the front wheels being within eighteen inches of the edge of the precipice. Had not the couplings broken the disaster would have been terrible to contemplate. The front part or bogie of the second van had left the rails, but the hind wheels still held to the metals and so saved the whole train, after the couplings had given, from running headlong over the cliff, for the incline of the road was considerable. The third van and the two carriages were not derailed.

The pilgrims turned out of the train in a languid and lethargic mass and crawled vaguely about the line. They contemplated the engine in the river with an air of weariness. They were so little disturbed from their tortoise-like calm that one might have supposed that an episode of this kind was a common occurrence. The journey from Mecca had been to them a succession of wonders, and this was but one of many strange things. If a railway bell had been rung they would have been thrilled and alarmed, but the dropping of an engine with two men into a river was not a matter for emotion.

Their first care was to set the samovar going and then to glide down to the river to wash.

I may say that during all this time it was raining hard. It had rained steadily since daylight, and further, I may add that it rained with equal perseverance all night. In due course, namely at 5 P.M., a relief train came up from the direction of Haifa. It consisted of trucks enough to take the pilgrims and of a guard's van. The process of transferring the baggage was very slow, owing to the narrowness of the way. On the river side the train was within eighteen inches of the edge, so that it was dangerous to pass on that part of the road with heavy trunks; while on what may be termed the land side was a deep, stone-lined trench between the line of rails and the cliff. There was a choice, therefore, between falling into the river on the one side, or into the stone crevasse on the other. A special difficulty arose in connection with the transfer of the injured men. The stoker could be helped along between two of his comrades, but the driver was unable to stand. It so happened that on the train was a solitary Bedouin who possessed a very strong and ample cloak. I proposed that the driver should be placed in the cloak and carried between two men along the narrow way as if he were on a stretcher. It was explained to me, however, that he was a Moslem and that he could not be carried lying down because it would be 'unlucky' and a portent of death. He must be carried, his co-religionists decided, upon a man's back. I protested earnestly against this inhuman procedure. I appealed to the patient as well as to his friends, but all was in vain; so I witnessed the horrible spectacle of a

heavy man with a ruptured intestine being carried along a very shaky road on another man's back, while he was held precariously in place by a third. I made the poor fellow as comfortable as I could on the floor of the guard's van, on a bed of coats and cloaks, and was gratified to find that he slept a little before we came to the journey's end. He was a man of admirable fortitude and courage, who never uttered a sound of complaint, and was only distressed by the fear that he was giving trouble.

We left the scene of the accident at 5.30 P.M. As there was no available carriage on the train my wife and I rode in the guard's van, sitting on bags on the floor. It was a very dreary journey, for we were destined not to reach Haifa until 2 A.M. on the following morning. The hours seemed to be interminable. I never looked at my watch without being convinced that it had stopped. The night was not only dark but very cold, while the pattering of rain on the roof of the van made for melancholy. To increase the dreariness of the situation there was no light in the van until a candle was obtained from the pilgrims. It was stuck in a bottle and placed on the floor. It gave a sorry illumination to a sorry scene—a bare van with people sitting or lying on the floor in company with a dying man and another who was grievously injured. I am inclined to think that we should have been better without the candle, for there is a negative relief in absolute darkness.

When we were two or three hours distant from Haifa a passenger carriage was attached to the train in which we completed the journey. It was at this point that we met certain prominent officials of the line who were on

their way to the scene of the disaster. There were some six of them—all, I believe, Turks. They very courteously came to see me in the guard's van, and civilities and cards were exchanged through the medium of the dragoman. I was wishing that I could speak direct to these gentlemen, when one of them came towards me, and, holding out his hand, observed with fervour, 'Oh, what a bally country!' It was a somewhat unusual introductory remark, but, assuming that the adjective employed had a condemnatory meaning, it was not entirely out of place, for the night was dark and cold, it was pouring with rain, we were without food or the possibility of obtaining any. I was, however, so delighted to meet a person who spoke English that I grasped this gentleman very warmly by the hand and told him how pleased I was to meet some one I could talk to. To this he replied, 'Oh, what a bally country!' I agreed with his views as to the immediate country, but, wishing to change the subject, said, 'This has been a most unfortunate accident.' To which he answered, 'Oh, what a bally country!' I then tried simpler sentences, such as 'Good evening,' 'Are you not wet?' but on each occasion he replied with the criticism, 'Oh, what a bally country!' I then found that, with the exception of this curious sentence, he did not know a single word or syllable of English. I am convinced that he had not the faintest idea of the meaning of his speech. I imagine that he had been at one time associated with an English railway engineer who had given vent to this expression so frequently that this courteous, well-intending Turk had learnt it like a parrot. As he stepped out of the guard's

van into the rain I said, 'I am afraid you will have a very trying journey,' to which he answered, with a smile and a polite bow, 'Oh, what a bally country!' Thus we parted without further exchange of ideas.

We reached Haifa at 2 A.M. and got to bed at 3 A.M., having been 'up' exactly twenty-four hours. The engine-driver was removed to the excellent and admirably equipped German hospital in the town. I went to see him early next morning. He was conscious, but quite free from pain, and was rapidly nearing the end. His wife was with him. He smiled, as an old friend would smile, when we shook hands, for there was this bond between us—that I had been with him on the train. He nodded as I went out of the room. It was to show that he knew that he was really saying good-bye. He died a little while after I left the ward.

On the day following this gloomy episode we were relieved to see the Austrian Lloyd steamer come into Haifa and to hear that our luggage was on board. The steamer was due to start for Jaffa and Port Said at about five in the evening. All seemed well, but it was not all well. There were other troubles ahead. It was evident that a storm from the south was brewing, and as experience of the landing at Haifa was fresh in our minds we resolved to get on board the boat before the sea gathered strength. So we embarked in the morning, while the weather was as yet moderate, and stepped on to the deck of the steamer with considerable satisfaction. Unfortunately the storm increased every hour until it attained alarming proportions. It will be noteworthy as the most severe gale that struck the Syrian coast during the winter of 1911.

Several ships were driven ashore, while the havoc made of the beach houses at Port Said was deplorable to see.

Mount Carmel offered a certain amount of shelter to the ship, and in an ordinary gale the anchorage would have been secure, but this was not an ordinary gale. We were hanging on to two anchors, and were doing well until about 7.30 in the evening, when one of the steel hawsers snapped, leaving us with one anchor only and the wide beach of Acre under our lee as a place to be wrecked on. The boat was well found and the captain an exceptionally able officer. He did the only thing that was possible. He hauled up the remaining anchor and steamed out into the open sea. We then had definite experience of the process known and flippantly talked about as 'steaming in the teeth of a gale.' Without going into any detail it would be fitting to describe the night as a fearful night during which no one could have slept for a moment.

On the following morning I ventured out on deck to look upon one of the most desolate scenes in the world—a grey sea in a gale. The force of the wind was still extreme. 'The world was nothing but an immensity of great foaming waves rushing at us, under a sky low enough to touch with the hand, and dirty like a smoked ceiling. In the stormy space surrounding us there was as much flying spray as air.'¹ Here in this lamentable scene was to be read 'The burden of the desert of the sea.'

It was eleven in the morning when I came on deck. It was then possible to make out in the wild haze a point of land just abreast of us. I asked a sailor what land it

¹ *Youth*, by Joseph Conrad. (New York, 1903.)

was. To my horror he replied 'Haifa.' So, after steaming ahead for fifteen hours, we had done no more than just keep abreast of the place we had started from. At seven in the evening the wind abated, and at noon the next day we entered, with much relief, the harbour of Port Said.

It was not until we were actually ashore at Port Said that we felt safe—safe from the possibility of being asked to visit another sacred site.

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